Expiation

BY OCTAVE THANET

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LONDON; FREDERICK WARNE AND CO.

EXPIATION

"You have one brave boy alive," said Adèle steadily.

EXPIATION,

BY

OCTAVE THANET,

ILLUSTRATED BY A. B. FROST

"Boy, remember 't ain't how you feel,
It's what you do that counts."

LONDON:
FREDERICK WARNE AND CO.
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1890

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EXPIATION.

I.

ONLY the puddles and sluices of water showed, unless the rider flashed his lantern down the road. Then a disk of landscape, a kind of weird etching, was struck out of the night. Huge gum-trees dripped on either side; a stealthy patter of rain-drops dribbling through the thicket of trumpet-vines, "tar-blankets,"* and briar which masked the swamp beneath. The rain had ceased, but not a star appeared to illumine this surly and dismal nature.

East and west, as the lantern-bearer knew, the rotten corduroy was drawn in a straight line across the morass. East and west, north and south, only a few lonely cabins with their clearings broke the monotony of the forest between Village Creek and the Black River. Wherever the land was creased by a depression, the water covered the roots of the cypresses and tupello-gums.

* Or, *tear*-blankets.

"What a country to live in!" muttered the rider; "is all Arkansas like this, I wonder?"

Any one could guess from the voice that he who spoke was not a Southerner. It was a very pleasant voice, however, with nice modulations, and when the lantern rays swerved at a stumble of the horse, they showed a slender, well-knit figure, and a delicate, bright young face, with gentle brown eyes, and not enough down on the upper lip or cheek to hide a mobile mouth and rounded chin; altogether a handsome young fellow. Tiny wrinkles at the corners of the eyelids and a dimple in the cheek hinted that this was also a young fellow who laughed easily. He was laughing now, swinging the lantern above his mud-splashed legs.

"What a figure of fun you are, Fairfax Rutherford," said he, gayly, "and yet you don't look half the native either."

With a praiseworthy notion of suiting his dress to the country, Fairfax, before he left England, had bought such an outfit as they sell you in Regent Street "for the bush." Therefore he was clad in a wide, cream-colored soft hat, a shooting-jacket of brown duck that bristled with pockets, and corduroy trousers pushed into leggins.

"Father will laugh at me, I dare say"—so his

thoughts rambled on—"but I *think* he will be glad; what a bore to be a stranger to one's own father!"

He tried to recall his single youthful visit to his father's plantation. Only a few pictures would come. A great, white, ill-built house and mysterious clutter of outbuildings; bare-footed negroes tumbling over each other, in their efforts to "make haste wid de dinner;" outside, the river noises behind the willows, the wind in the cypress brakes, the reckless hunts through the cane, the grinning black faces among the cotton bolls, the hogs rooting under the pecan-trees, and cattle browsing on the wide fields; the unkempt figures that used to loiter round the store and gin; that good little romp, his stepmother's daughter, Adèle; those two mischievous, riotous, soft-hearted lads, his brothers, and the jocular, shabby, easy-going planter, his father; such were the pictures that all at once made Fairfax Rutherford sigh, for the old barbarous plentiful days were gone forever, and the boys lay in their unmarked soldiers' graves.

Soon his thoughts strayed to a conversation which he had heard that afternoon, just before he started. He had passed through the Federal lines,

and his day's journey ended with sunset at a poor tavern, post-office and "store" as well, where he hoped to procure another horse and a guide. Guide there was none to be had, but the woman who kept the house, when she was told his name, greeted him warmly, and bestowed on him her only horse, "a broken-down Texas pony with the string-halt." She set before him her best of food, also; fried pork, and corn bread, and chiccory coffee. While he ate he could overhear his hostess talking to some wayfarer. The man, with the vigilant curiosity of rustics and of the troublous time, had noted Rutherford's hat in the gallery.

"Who all you got in thar?" said he.

"He done come," answered the woman, briefly.

"Fair Rutherford? Mymy! Mymy! Wun't the ole man be chirked up! Whut like's he, onyhow? Favor Jeff or Rafe?"

"Naw, he pintedly does favor his maw. But he got the same pleasant laffin' turn like his paw. He ain't so tall an' stout like Jeff an' Rafe, but he are a mighty pretty young man."

The man laughed good-naturedly.

"Women folkses is all fur looks. Now t' my mine, Jeff an' Rafe ben the purties' young fellers I ever did see. Run an' ride an' shoot—law me,

they warn't nuthin' they'd orter know they didn't done, by gum! An' fightin'—my Lord! I cayn't get satisfied, nohow, with them boys bein' killed up! I ben with Jeff at Springfield—leadin' the charge with three wyounds onto him—jess like the ole man, them boys. He's mighty gayly an' pleasant, but I tell ye he are a painter * in battle. He didn't quit fightin' till he must. An' I stuck tew him, blame my skin!"

"You did, shore, Mist' Fowler," responded the woman, warmly; "better'n some of his own kin. Look at Mr. Fairfax Rutherford stayin' over to Europ stiddier comin' home an' fightin'—not that he'd 'a' got are good neether by comin'."

"I heard tell he ben a abolitionist, an' that's how come he went tuh Europ."

"Shucks, naw, sir. Aunt Hizzie, she tole me a plumb diff'rent tale; sayd he ben waitin' on Mis' Rutherford that's dead—warn't she the third?"

The man laughed, and asked how was he to know? he couldn't keep up with the old man's marryings.

"Yes, sir, she ben the third, an' she belonged down t' Little Rock; an' the cunnel he jes' loved

* Panther. They were not uncommon in Arkansas at this date—in the sixties.

her tew kill, but Mist' Fairfax Rutherford got her word tew marry *him*, an' when he diskivered her mind ben a turnin' tur the cunnel, he taken it mighty hard, but he give her back her word an' lit out an' went t' Europ. Didn't do nare meanness t' the cunnel."

"Must 'a' ben a durned fool!" was the man's contemptuous comment; but whether his contempt was excited by Fairfax Rutherford's forbearance or his going to Europe did not appear.

"He was a mighty pretty man," continued Mrs. Crowder, meditatively. "I can jes' see the way he looked when he come yere on a visit. Never did come but twicet. Hit ben in the fall of the year. Yes, sir. An' if ye please, he wears a coat all trimmed up with fur, kase of it bein' so cole up North. They all sent the kerridge, an' little Fair hopped aout an' ben a limpin' raoun' like he uster. He gives a sorter styart like, when he fust seen the chile, an' I heerd him say t' hisseff, 'Yes, he's got the eyes.' Eyes like hern, ye onderstand. Anybuddy cud see he jes' sot the world an' any * by that ar boy, from the fust minnit. The cunnel let him cyar 'way kase he sayd the doctors in

* Any is often used for "all."

Lunnon cud cure his laig; and they done it fur a fac'. He came back oncet on a visit an' didn't halt a bit. Looked like his paw cudn't bar ter pyart with him that time, nohow, but I reckon he'd guv his word."

"Then he'd stick tew hit," said Fowler, doggedly; "the ole man never rues back.* Reckon the young feller will be goin' aout by sun up?"

"He are goin' aout this evenin', Mist' Fowler. He's heerd his paw done broke his laig an' is right feeble, an' he cayn't stop. Says it's a straight road an' he doan' mind mud. He's fixin' t' go naow."

"Looks like he got grit. I 'lowed he had when I heerd 'baout his letter t' the ole man. Writ it soon's he heerd 'baout Rafe. Say, wisht I cud cyar the boy longer me, but 'twudn't be bes', I reckon. Waal, mud ain't more'n shoe-mouth deep moster the way, an's ye say, Mis' Crowder, hit's a straight road. An'—it's me they all's ayfter, not him. Say, Tobe's like t' be a spell gittin' of that, cudn't I jes' git a squint at him?"

"Come by and see him."

"Better not, better not, some un mought come

---

* "Rue back" is to try to get out of a bad bargain.

by an' see us t'gether, but I'd like fur t' see him."

Apparently Mrs. Crowder acquiesced; for Fairfax, whose ears were abnormally acute, heard cautious footsteps outside, and had a sense of being inspected through the window.

He had listened to the whole conversation with a mingling of interest and amusement. How the half-forgotten dialect returned to him, with its soft drawl and nasal accent, and those singular inflections that seemed to leave the voice poised in mid-air, as it were, at the close of a sentence.

At some parts of the talk he winced. His father's many marriages were a sore point to him, as human nature's compromises with the ideal always are to youth. To be the third Mrs. Rutherford's son seemed bad enough, but to have the fourth Mrs. Rutherford moving about the house, and, in a painstaking way, dusting the portraits of her predecessors, was almost indecent. "I dare say it's the country," he muttered; "everybody seems to be marrying his or her third or fourth—Hello!"

He reined in his horse sharply and looked down the road. Certainly that was the splash of hoofs through the mud. Instinctively he let the lan-

tern, which was slung about his neck, drop into its natural position, while with his free hand he drew a pistol. The Federal troops had forced Marmaduke and Shelby to retreat; but bands of guerillas infested the country. Offscourings of both armies, outlaws of all kinds; under the pretence of patriotism, they stripped the miserable citizens of what dregs of property war had left them.

Fairfax, hearkening, felt an ominous tremor run through his horse's limbs. In a second the pursuing horse galloped into the circle of light. A man, hatless and coatless, was clinging to the beast's neck; his arms clasped about the neck, his head hanging. The horse, a powerful bay mare, galloped recklessly over the rotten timber. Fairfax shouted; he saw that the man must be wounded, because there was blood on his hair and his shirt. Simultaneously he caught at the flying bridle.

The mare stopped and flung up her head; the rider lay like a limp rag.

"I say, are you hurt?" called Fairfax; "do you want some brandy?" Then he started violently, bent over the man, and touched his hand.

"Great heavens!" he muttered, "what a horror!"

It was the man who had talked with Mrs. Crowder that afternoon, and he was stone dead. Somebody had lashed the unfortunate creature to the horse, tying his wrists together about the neck, and his feet by the ankles.

The young fellow looked at him with a quivering face. He was shaken by a confusion of pity and horror. It was his first sight of violent death. Bred in the daintiest and smoothest of old-world civilization, bloodshed and personal peril were only printed words to him. Here he was, flung into the arena. And he was conscious of an excited curiosity, besides his pity and his horror. At the same time another obscurer emotion threaded his sensations, more personal, with an edge of pain to it; an emotion haunting and subtle like a nightmare recollection, gone before it can be viewed distinctly.

Back, far back in his childhood, in dark rooms, in negro cabins listening to hobgoblin yarns of conjured victims; once, wringing his hands on a river bank while a girl, hardly a year older than he, wades into the current, branch in hand, and rescues a drowning boy; or on horseback galloping after dogs and hounds toward the horrible tusks at bay; in a hundred similar experiences

that intangible terror had its springs. How far back yesterday seemed the old childish spectre; but now——

"I believe I'm afraid of being afraid!" cried young Fairfax.

His thoughts, which take longer in the telling, did in fact occupy the briefest space; and all the while he was holding the bay mare's rein and staring at the livid face flung over her neck.

When the young man shifted his lantern for better examination—not with any hope of finding a lingering of life, for no creature could live a minute with that jagged tear in his brain—he perceived a folded paper pinned very carefully to the back of the dead man's shirt.

To Rutherford's amazement the paper bore his own name. He unpinned it and opened the folds to find these words:

"This is Mr. James l Fowler he was shot by the graybacks He was a right good friend of your father For Gods sake take him to his wife and six childern *This is importtant* They live on the yon side of Runing Watter Rite on your road the horse knows the way"

The handwriting was cramped and uneven, and there was no signature.

"Well, here *is* a pretty mess," said Fairfax; "Running Water? where the deuce is Running Water? and does the 'yon' side mean *this* side or the further side? Confound it, I used to know!"

His vague terrors had all disappeared; he was occupied entirely with the distasteful errand proposed to him. But he did not consider, for a second, the refusing of it; even had the man not been his father's friend, there were the miserable wife and six children waiting "on the yon side of Runing Watter."

Dismounting, he bound up the man's head with his silk handkerchief, as decently as he could; after which he got on his sorry hack again, and rode on, leading the bay mare.

It did flash across him once that it might be a trap; but he could see no motive for the needless pains, since any guerillas minded to capture and plunder him need only wait on the road. No, it was more likely that some helpless witness of the murder had taken such strange means of sending the murdered man's body home.

Yet, as he pored over the note again, he was struck with the impression of something underlying the words.

"*This is important,*" he repeated, "and why

marked? What an extraordinary way to express himself. By Jove, it may be herself, for anything I know."

He wondered if the writer could be Mrs. Crowder. "The man must have been shot directly after I left"—so he made out the story—"and it must have been somebody who knew me and knew where I was going, and what an old signpost I was riding. Overtake me! by Jove, a cow could overtake this brute."

The road grew better for a little space, but presently dipped into a denser forest. Fairfax's lantern showed him the gleam of water. A dark stream wound among the cypress trunks into the night. Plainly, this was Running Water, and on the other side should be poor Fowler's house; yes, he could see the twinkle of a light.

Riding nearer, the shape of a house took outline—a large, low, gambrel-roofed house—and at a window the light. A pang struck the young man's heart as he thought how the light was shining for the father thus taking his woful last ride. A child's white head was close to the lamp, and a woman held up a baby to make futile clutches at its own little laughing face in the window-pane.

Fairfax could have groaned. "How can I tell

them?" he thought. "Confound the kind-hearted meddler that saddled this nasty business on me." But there was nothing for it now but to go on. Moreover, at this moment, a couple of yelping hounds burst out of the shadows to plunge at their master's legs with a tumult of howls.

The door was opened, showing a woman who held a rude lamp on high. Even at that moment Fairfax perceived that she was young and pretty. Above the voices of another woman and the elder children rang a sweet, high little treble—"Daddy comin'! Daddy comin'!" Fairfax felt heart-sick.

"We all reckoned you weren't coming to-night," said the young woman, shading her eyes with a slim white hand, while the other lifted the lamp for a wider view. The light brought her a picture which made her run swiftly to the horse's head.

"He's been hurt?" she said, in a very low voice. "Oh, poor fellow!"

Fairfax was aware of a quick relief, a sense of companionship: this wasn't the way that a sister or wife would talk; the girl must be some neighbor; and afterward he remembered how sure he felt, with the first glance, that she was a woman to help one.

A few nervous, brief sentences told her all that

he knew of the tragedy. She took the note. As she read, the lamplight was on her fine profile, and loosened hair, and the lovely oval of one cheek.

How admirably pretty she was, to be sure! But it was not her beauty that made the young fellow stare at her. He was looking at the fingers on the note—white, smooth fingers, with almond-shaped nails.

"Why, it's a lady!" he exclaimed.

Just then she lifted her eyes. They were swimming in tears.

"Oh, Cousin Fair, that I should not have known you!" she said.

"It *is* Adèle, then," cried he. Of course; how could he have failed to recognize her before, his little cousin who was his stepmother's daughter?

He might have taken his childhood's privilege on her soft, pale cheek, but a voice from the doorway recalled him, like a blow.

"Looks like you all a long spell out thar," said Jim Fowler's wife. "Come on in; I'll be shore chillin'* ef I stan' yere much longer. Fotch the

* "Chilling," in Arkansas, does not mean catching cold or being cold; but having the chill, which is part of the ague common in low lands.

gentleman by, Miss Della, please, w'ile Jim putts up the hosses."

The young man and the girl exchanged a glance of miserable confidence, each conscious of a touch of relief in the other's presence.

"You stay here," whispered Adèle; "get between him and the light so she cayn't see; I'll tell her."

The light wavered above her brown head as she ran into the house. The door was shut behind her. Outside, to Fairfax waiting while the hounds crouched at their dead master's feet, whimpering, and the wind was rising in the cypress brake, it seemed a long time before the door opened again; and, during it all, he could not hear a sound from within.

"I feel as I used to feel when I was a cowardly little cub," was his involuntary comparison; "if only Adèle would come!"

She had come; at least she was on the threshold. A lad of thirteen or fourteen stood behind her, crying bitterly but silently. He held the rude "grease lamp" of the country; and Adèle helped Fairfax lift poor Jim Fowler from his horse. Together they bore him into the house and laid him on his bed, where the widow came and bent over

him. She was dreadfully calm, though the children made a din of grief about her. She did not seem to know when the boy coaxed them into another room. But Fairfax saw Della send a compassionate glance after the little fellow.

"They's things t'be done," the widow said, in a dull, hard voice, "things; holp me, Miss Della."

"It would be in his boots," said the girl.

"Yes, we 'lowed to putt it in his stocking," said the woman, bending over him, dry-eyed but trembling, and straining at the boots. They were the very raggedest, forlornest boots that Fairfax had ever seen; and removed, there were revealed strips of rag twisted about the feet in place of stockings, as is done in some parts of Arkansas to this day. Yet otherwise the man's attire was whole, and cleaner than common. The woman fell to unwinding the rags with desperate haste. All at once she straightened herself and pushed something at Adèle, saying: "Didn't you tole me yon was young Rutherford?"

"Yes, madam," Fairfax interrupted, "I am Fairfax Rutherford."

"Then thar's you' paw's money," said she.

Fairfax was at a loss for words. The woman

had thrown the package at him; perforce he had caught it and held it, dumbly.

"Caount hit," she said, sharply; "thar had orter be twenty-one thousan' five hundred dollars. Look if hit's thar!"

More and more bewildered, Fairfax assured himself that the roll of "greenbacks" contained the exact sum mentioned.

"Certainly," he said, gently, "you are right, but——"

"He offered Jim five hundred for to go and get it," said the woman, dully, "an' he got it. Gimme that ar five hundred an' git on you' hoss and fly! Them that killed him will be ayfter *you*. Ye better make haste."

The ambiguous wording of the note grew plain to Fairfax. The writer knew the secret and was trying guardedly (for the paper might fall into hostile hands) to help him to his father's money. But the rest was as dark as ever; he was only sure that he could not leave the widow of the man who had been murdered on his father's errand in such a plight. So he told her.

Her tense mood had snapped the instant her search ended, and she was sitting on the bed now, stroking the dead man's face and whispering in

the deaf ears pitiful broken sentences: "Ye know I tole ye—tew great a risk, tew great, tew great—we cud of made out without the money, Jim, if the stock *be* gone—but what'll I do with the children, Jim, without you? Oh, I cayn't bar it! I cayn't! I cayn't!" And so writhed herself down to the floor and grovelled there.

It was a most painful sight to see, but not so painful as to see her, the next moment, totter to her feet and clutch both Rutherford's arms, fairly shaking him in her deadly vehemence, while her voice rang through the room.

"'Twas Dick Barnabas done it! He fund aout an' done it fur the *money*. Ye kin keep ever' cent er that ar five hundred ef ye'll kill Dick Barnabas! Kill him, kill him!"

"Hush, Mrs. Fowler, the children will hear," said Adèle, quietly; "we'll kill him, sure." She slipped her strong young arm about the poor soul's waist and very gently pulled her away.

Fairfax would have pushed the five hundred dollars into her hands. "I will do all I can to bring the assassin to justice," he murmured, feeling sure that he was not saying the right thing, but knowing nothing better.

He saw her eyes glitter. "I want 'em *killed!*"

she screamed, "killed and a layin' dead. I want t' see it, myself!"

"I will do all I can to give you that pleasure, madam," replied Fairfax, dryly. "Dear me, what a Rob Roy Macgregor's wife sort of woman she seems to be!" he was thinking.

"An' I'll holp you, mister," piped a shrill little voice. It was the boy, who had stolen back and was listening, unperceived.

"In this extraordinary country the very babes seem to thirst for blood," thought Fairfax.

The boy was a sallow, white-haired lath of a youngster, such as one may see by the dozen in the Arkansas river bottoms, but his insignificant presence dilated with passion. He went on: "Baby an' Jim's t' sleep, an' sis is a gyardin' of 'em. I tole 'er the big bear 'd git her, ef she come outer the room. I— I know suthin' *she*"—he looked at his mother—"doan' know."

"Tell us, Bud, honey," Adèle said, laying a white hand on the sharp little shoulder. So the boy told: "Yestiddy evenin',* ayfter you come, 'baout a hour, I reckon; I ben aout in the patch snatchin' cotton; an' I heerd two hosses acomin'.

* There is no afternoon South. Morning, evening, and night are the parts of day.

One on 'em was that thar big black with a blazed face——"

"Dick Barnabas' horse!" cried Adèle.

"Yaas ma'am; I ben sorter skeered up, an' I hid 'hind the cotton so they all didn't see me, an' they warn't nare critter raoun', an' Dick he got off his hoss an' projicked raoun the yeard w'ilst you all ben in the haous, ean' I cudn't git tew ye. Then he went back an' they all rid off agin." The poor wife of the murdered man pushed her hair off her forehead, struggling to catch the meaning of the boy's words.

"How came ye didn't tole me?" said she, "ye'd orter."

"I tole paw, right straight."

"What d' he say?"

"Nuthin'; jes' whistled. That thar ain't all. Paw done suthin' you uns doan' know. He came out 'fore he went off; an' he guv me a right nice sheet of paper an' a pencil. Sayd he taken 'em frum Miss Della. An' he axed me write on it. I 'member whut I writ. 'Twar like this—jes' good's I cud write. 'Dear Cunnell, the money is gone, yestiddy, by'—then he made me make some queer raound tricks on the paper; sayd they didn't mean nuthin', but they all would reckon they *did*—an'

the rest war 'Look aout!' an' it ben signed by two big crosses. That's all."

"What did your paw do with the letter, Bud?" said Della.

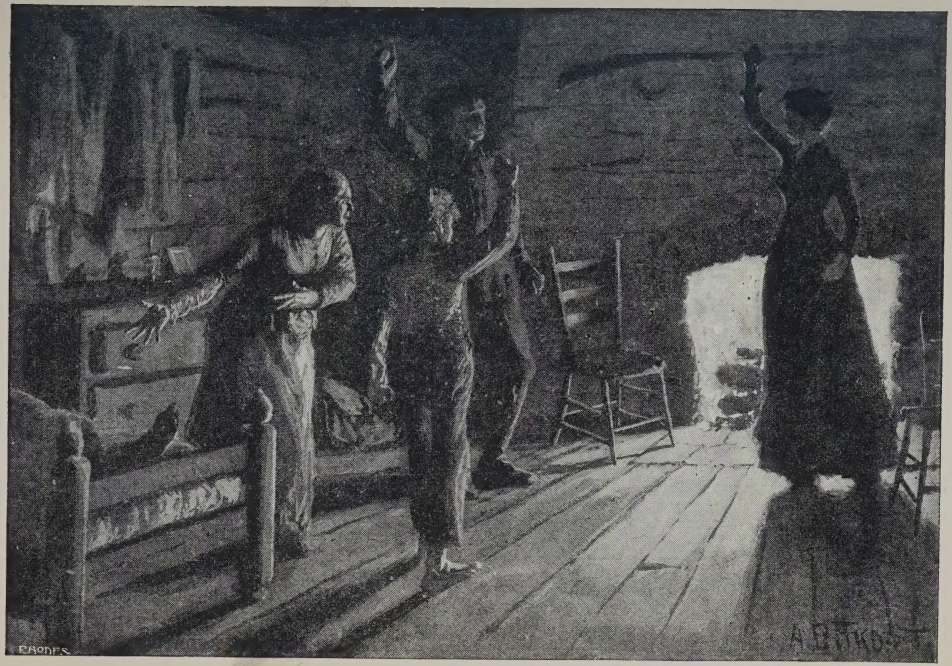
"He put it insider the money belt he got frum the Yankees when he ben payroled."

Adèle stooped over the form on the bed. "The belt is gone," she said, quietly; "I thought as much. Oh, it's plain enough. He didn't tell us of the danger, he only told us that he would put on those old boots and rags instead of stockings, because he might meet some of those villains and they would be for robbing him, and would find the money stripping his clothes. But he knew all the time, and he took that letter to mislead them and save the money, whatever happened to him. Oh, while there is a Rutherford living we will never forget how he laid down his life for us; nor shall his wife and children want while we have anything left."

"An' you all will kill Dick Barnabas?" the wife cried, "you *will?*"

"We will," said Adèle, between firm lips, "I swear it." She raised her right hand.

"We all sw'ar it!" squeaked the boy's shrill, excited voice.



"We all sw'ar it!"

Their hands were in the air, even Fairfax's, who felt the melodramatic twang of it all as jarring.

The picture remained with him his life through: a bare room where the unplastered walls and uncarpeted floor were of the same rough boards; huge logs crackling and spouting flame in the great crooked fireplace; and the fire-light, rather than the feeble glow of the lamp, displaying the table spread for supper; the "split-bottom" chairs, the coarse, bright quilt that had been half-wrapped about an indistinct and distorted shape, the white pillows shining beneath a ghastly head, and, back in the shadow, these dark figures with their uplifted hands and glistening eyeballs. Enough, also, of the atmosphere of the studio (the elder Fairfax was an artist) had affected young Rutherford's sensibilities to cause a quick perception of the grace of Della's pose and the noble lines of her neck and shoulders.

"We swear it," they said, together, Fairfax's lips moving with the others.

"Now, Cousin Fairfax," said Adèle, all emotion disappearing from her manner, "you *must* go."

"And leave you here alone with the chance of

those scoundrels returning," cried Fairfax. "No, thanks, Adèle; you will have to submit to my society for to-night."

"But you *must* go, Cousin Fair," said she, quietly; "there is almost no show of Barnabas troubling us; *we* have no money. He don't know of the five hundred dollars you have left here. He thinks it has gone to Unk' Ralph. *That's* why you must go, Cousin Fair, *he* may need you the worst kind, and I don't need you the least bit on earth."

"But if you should be attacked?" The young man was torn between two motives. He must save his father, yet how could he leave this delicate girl to such unspeakable risks.

"I reckon we can make out," said Adèle; "can't we, Bud?"

"I reckon," said the solemn boy; "she killed a wild-cat onct. I kin shoot, too; an' we know a place in the woods to hide."

"That's so, Cousin Fair," Adèle added; "don't wait here, fly back to Montaigne. I don't need you, and Uncle Ralph does, for I expect they will have gone straight there. Oh, I'm sending you into danger," she said, choking, "but it's your *place* to help *him!*"

"An' you'll fotch a heap more danger on we uns, mister," said the boy, bluntly, "jes' a bein' here, than you'll be holp. Fur Dick'll be ayfter *you* nex'."

That argument conquered. Five minutes later the bay mare was carrying Fairfax swiftly through the night.

I.

THE plantation of Montaigne is on the Black River. High hills roll back from one shore, the rich, flat "bottom land" darkens the other with its exhaustless forest of gum and cypress. Long ago the old house was burned; but in Colonel Rutherford's day it was the great house of all the country round. Where the forest receded—for a mere breathing space, as it were—stood the little settlement, while from a knoll crowned with sycamores the planter's house overlooked the plantation. A beetling roof shaded the piazza, that is to say, the upper story of the piazza, which was in two stories in front of the house, having a lattice below where honeysuckle climbed and sent out floating tendrils to grasp the rude pillars above, and being bisected by a wide, open hall—"gallery," such a hall is named in Arkansas. The gallery, when Colonel Rutherford ruled at Montaigne, bore the semblance of

a museum of arms. There, used to hang the shot-guns, rifles, revolvers, and powder-horns; there, were stored hatchets, meat-saws, and axes —supposing them to be in their appointed place, which, to be sure, was not the most likely thing in the world on a plantation; and there, swung all the finery of a Southern rider, in saddle, spurs, and blanket—truly a pretty sight. Not so pretty, I dare say, were the heaps of flour-sacks and meal-bags and the like stores of provisions which Aunt Hizzie, the cook, never would keep in any other spot than the "back gallery;" or her dingy and tousled bunches of yarbs depending from the ceiling; and, certainly, nothing pretty, only dark mystery, occupied that corner shelf whereon, from a time so far back that no memory of the young Rutherfords ran to the contrary, had rested Aunt Hizzie's "mixteries."

Aunt Hizzie herself regularly swallowed any drugs left by the family, "to sabe dem;" and there was a tradition that she had been cured of a sorrowful attack of "de conjure sickness" by the half-bottle of horse liniment that Rafe Rutherford threw into the ash-barrel.

"My word," she was overheard to narrate,

"dat ar ben de mos' powerfullis mixtery dat ebber done pass my lips. Hit strike me so heavy I'se a wrastlin' wid it de enjurin' night. But it sho' sen' de sickness off a runnin'. Bress de Lawd, I ain't got take no mo'!"

Aunt Hizzie, in her white turban (economically made out of a castaway flour-sack), with a blue apron trying to define a waist for her rotund shape, was always a figure in the gallery when dinner was under way.

On one side of the gallery was the dining-room, unplastered, as were all the rooms, but painted,

and having a wainscoting put up by a clever carpenter from the North, in the Rutherfords' palmy days. He it was who built the tall sideboard in the wall, which made the expensive black walnut sideboard from Little Rock look like a dwarf craning its neck up at a giant. "Before the war" the sideboards held a glittering show of glass and silver. Hues of tawny brown and amber and dusky reds gleamed like jewels in old-fashioned decanters, welcome to every comer.

All the rooms were on the same generous scale, high-studded, with wide windows and deep-throated fireplaces, big enough to hold half a forest; and relics of the faded pomp of old Virginia days were scattered among the primitive furniture of a new country, suggesting gold embroidery (a thought tarnished) on a linsey-woolsey gown.

There were signs of a woman's presence also, fresh curtains draping the windows (by this time darned with a pathetic care), bunches of swamp hackberries and holly twigs in showy vases bought on some of the Colonel's trips to New Orleans or Memphis, a little flutter of feminine fancies in needlework over tables or chairs. And, on the

library walls, three expensive frames of dingy gilt enclosed three landscapes in oil, painted by the present Mrs. Rutherford when young. They all had deep-blue skies with cotton-wool clouds, and a rolling green landscape and puffy dark trees. In fact, they were about as dreadful as even a young lady's work can be; but it was the custom of the Colonel to sit and smoke before them, and contemplate them with innocent pride. From thence, most commonly, his eyes would go (after a second's pause before his father in his Mexican War regimentals) to the row of the three former mistresses of Montaigne.

The first two were rosy and smiling young matrons, wearing their hair (black or yellow) in short round curls, and shrugging their plump shoulders out of their low-necked frocks; but the third Mrs. Rutherford had been painted by another hand. Fairfax Rutherford, during their brief betrothal, had made this picture. He had painted her, a slender girl in a white frock, plucking flowers in an arbor, and smiling over her shoulder at some unseen comer. Composition and handling were as crude as the treatment was ambitious; but perhaps because the artist's heart was in the work he had succeeded where a more skilful hand

might have failed, and captured the evanescent and pensive loveliness of his subject. Long afterward, in a moment of expansion, Fairfax said of his brother's wives: "Ralph was married by father to his first, his second married him, but *he* married poor Daisy."

"And the fourth Mrs. Rutherford?" asked the friend.

Fairfax shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, *she* just happened," said he. "My brother is the most chivalrous of men, and Mrs. Peyton Rutherford was his second-cousin's widow without a penny. He married her to take care of her; and really it hasn't proved such a bad arrangement; she is a silly sort of creature, but she has done very well by Ralph."

Besides the pictures the library walls were further adorned by what in ante-bellum days was known as a "landscape paper," representing innumerable castles on the Rhine. There was one drawback, however, to the impressive beauty of this paper; inasmuch as the plantation painter who hung it, being new to the business, had misplaced some of the rolls, a large proportion of the castles were made to stand on their heads. The library, like the other rooms, had an enormous

fireplace and a cypress mantel painted black. Library may seem rather a courtesy title for a room containing only a single case of books; but there had been a library in his Virginia home, and a library the Colonel would have in Arkansas. The book-shelves held such books as Montaigne's "Essays," the "Waverley Novels," the poems of Tom Moore and Lord Byron (that was how the Colonel referred to them), Shakespeare's works and Milton's "Paradise Lost," Macaulay's "History of England," some old volumes of Congressional Reports, presented by friends in "the House," "Youatt on the Horse," the "Medical Encyclopædia," and "Niles's Register."

The Colonel (when he was ill or of a rainy Sunday) would occasionally dip into the other books; but Montaigne, according to his wife, he read "every day in the world." And she was sure she couldn't imagine why, because it certainly was a scandalous book, and the Colonel was the most moral of men; he wouldn't even repeat any of those wicked stories gentlemen are so fond of telling among themselves—not unless they were very funny indeed. Doubtless the honest man, of his own motion had hardly discovered the "Essays;" but he inherited Michel Montaigne, like the fam-

ily prejudices, his traditions of honor, and his father's sword. His own edition (the English translation of Coste, A.D. 1759) was bequeathed to him by his grandfather, a man of scholarly tastes, for whom he always entertained a tender affection, and who valued the genial old wit and gossip, and often would season his own conversation with Montaigne's high flavors.

At first Ralph Rutherford read for the sake of the old man and his comments, pencilled here and there. It was a labor of reverence and gratitude. But presently, from poring over the book he began to admire it; at last, to love it, as only the men of few books love their favorite. Many was the doughty battle that he had fought with his chief crony, a Presbyterian minister who owned a farm hard by, concerning the "Essays." Parson Collins called it a profligate book, and gave Montaigne no quarter. It was a sly delight to the Colonel to cull virtuous maxims or worldly sense from his treasure, and display them, unlabelled, until the parson was ensnared to praise them, when he would remark: "Yes, sir; Montaigne usually *is* sound. Glad you approve of him!" "Tut, tut, Ralph!" the parson used to answer warmly, "of course he has some decent senti-

ments; but approve of that atheistical, unprincipled old rake, no, sir, never! I'd be ashamed to read him!"

But as for the Colonel, he was vainer of his knowledge of Montaigne than of his shooting, which is a good deal to say in the backwoods. He liked to quote from the "Essays," though he seldom stuck closely to the text, and he told Montaigne's classical fables with a beautiful faith. But his crowning proof of affection was to give the essayist's name to his plantation.

A few of the books overflowed into the combination book-case and writing-desk which the Colonel called his "secretary." He was sitting before it on the morning following Fairfax's ride. Mrs. Rutherford had the rocking-chair opposite, her back to the row of portraits. But this attitude was from no design; she was incapable of jealousy, and bestowed the same painstaking dustings and yearly washings and wrapping in pink mosquito netting, which she did upon her own pictures. She did not grudge the dead ladies of Montaigne any posthumous affection. "He likes me better than either of you, you poor things," was the unspoken thought, as she sewed quietly before the painted faces, "and I reckon he cared more for

Daisy than for all three of us together. Well, I can't make *him* quite like Peyton either."

Perhaps the fourth Mrs. Rutherford was hardly the fool Fairfax Senior esteemed her, notwithstanding her silence, her inability to understand epigrams, and her awful landscapes. At any rate, she was pleasant to look upon, being a fair, placid woman, whose hair was still a lively brown, whose cheeks kept a pinkish tinge, and whose eyes were soft as her voice. She was not talking much this morning, but at intervals the Colonel would look up from his book, and then she would smile and make some remark out of her thoughts.

Near them was an open window, for in October the Arkansas sun will forget, for days, that the season is not summer.

A belated bluebird twittered and hopped on the window-sill. Then he rose, spread his wings, and flew past the big white store, over the black chimney of the gin and the whitewashed negro quarters, and grew into a black speck above the cypress wall beyond.

The Colonel's eye followed the mite and his brow contracted. Only a little beyond the brake was the grassy field where the white headstones stood guard over his dead wives and the four

little children who had died; but the Colonel was thinking that his two tall boys lay far from their kindred. The wife watching him could have echoed his sigh, because she, in her turn, thought how her husband was changed. "His hair is right gray," she said to herself, sadly, "and he stoops; he never did stoop before."

The Colonel's massive head, with its curly silver hair, thick as a boy's, was bent slightly, but not for better seeing; no, Ralph Rutherford's brilliant black eyes could catch the glint of a "'possum's" fur by moonlight still. The eyes were gentle and kind as well as brilliant, and held a twinkle of humor; Colonel Rutherford being, in fact, the famous story-teller of the country, and loving a good joke better than bread. He was a keen hunter also, and the best rider in his regiment, which need not disparage hundreds of good horsemen. Rather below than above the common stature, his figure inclined to heaviness, but showed iron muscles in the deep chest and long arms. His face, fringed by a short gray beard, was a round oval; the chin and jaws were square, but the mouth was small, the nose delicate, and the brows candid and beautiful. There was about the whole air of the man an extraordinarily

winning expression of frankness and humanity, though just now the features were darkened into sadness.

"He ain't reading, he's studying," thought Mrs. Rutherford, "always studying about the boys. Oh, dear, if we'd only had a child! Maybe it wouldn't have been a boy, though, and Della's like his own daughter. But a little boy—he'd be fifteen, now. Well, there's Fair." She changed a sigh into a smile, as women learn to do, and said aloud: "I reckon there was a crowd round the mill this morning when they heard about the meal."

The Colonel nodded, his face brightening. "You may say so. I didn't know there were so many folks left in the country. We haven't enough left to feed a chicken."

"Dear me, Colonel, I hope you left enough for ourselves," cried Mrs. Rutherford, all the housekeeper aroused.

"Oh, Aunt Hizzie took care of that," answered the Colonel, laughing. "She had Unk' Nels on hand with a wheelbarrow plumb full of sacks. But those folks, they did seem terrible pleased to get the meal, and specially the flour. The poor critters have been eating the wheat in the dough."

"I hope you didn't take any of our money," said Mrs. Rutherford.

"Greenbacks or gold," said her husband. Then he laughed. "What I *did* take," added he.

"I expect you let them have it whether they had money or not."

"Well, yes, ma'am; those that had a little money wanted to get close to me for the first show; but, says I, 'N-no; p-poor folks get just as hungry as rich!'"

The Colonel always stuttered a little when excited.

"We will all be as poor as the rest of them, soon, if you go on that way, Ralph."

"We are better off than most of them, honey," answered the Colonel, easily; "there's that twenty——"

But Mrs. Rutherford stopped him with a frightened look, drawing her chair nearer.

"There ain't a wall with plaster on it in the house, Colonel; do remember that."

"Nor there ain't a thief on this plantation either, black or white, Hettie. Oh, don't you worry; Della's all right at Fowler's, and she and Jim will be round this evening, peart as peart."

"Well, I hope so," answered Mrs. Rutherford,

her voice lowered to a whisper. "Has Dick been doing anything lately?"

"Devilling round about as usual," said the Colonel; "heard he hung a poor Jew pedler down on Cache* t'other day. He'd sold his cotton, and Dick 'lowed he had ought to have some money. 'Twas told me they hung him up four times, and ever' time they let him down he howled for mercy but he wouldn't tell a word about the money, and the last time they let him down he was dead, and they couldn't do no more with him. They're fiends incarnate, those fellers, and if it hadn't been for this cursed leg I'd have had Dick swinging! Look at it, we all sitting down at home a-shaking w-waiting for Dick to come and murder us! *I* shan't wait——"

"Oh, hush!" cried the lady, imploringly; "if anybody was to hear and tell, Dick would——"

"He—w-wouldn't do nothing more than he's aiming to do now, my dear!" was the Colonel's answer, with a chuckle; "he's as mad as he can be, anyhow, and has been ever since he lit out of the army to escape being shot. A b-bad bargain for Arkansas he wasn't, too."

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*Cache is a small river. They never say the Cache, but Cache simply.

"Oh, dear, I wish he had been," sighed Mrs. Rutherford.

"There's a right smart of scoundrels in the country to carry on the devil's trade besides Dick Barnabas; but he's got a heap of 'em with him, and once hang his gang up we may have peace. The others are just ornery scamps, not sense enough to keep from stealing from each other; but D-Dick has a head on him. And I'm not denying that Dick has his good qualities."

"Dick Barnabas!"

"Yes, ma'am, Dick Barnabas; they ain't very many, but they're like old Aunt Tennie's teeth; she ain't got but three, you know, but they're on opposite sides, so she makes out to do a p-power of eating with 'em. That's the way with Dick's good points, not many, but they're jest where they'll do the most good. He's brave as the devil, and he's tolerable kind to beasts (knows a heap about them, too), and he'll stick to his bargains. I don't think I ever knew Dick to rue back. Not even his bad trade with Parson Collins. Say, Hettie, did I ever tell you about that trade?"

"If you did I must have forgotten," said Mrs. Rutherford, who had heard the story half a dozen

times; but it was true enough also that she did forget her husband's stories; and true or not, the good Christian soul could have found warrant with her conscience for stretching a point if she might help him lose his sorrows, even for a little while.

He settled himself comfortably in his chair, with a twinkle of the eye. "Must 'a' been six or seven years ago that it happened," said he. "Yes, ma'am, I remember it was 'bout two years after Parson lost his wife, and there was talk of his marrying the Widow Bainbridge; I don't believe he ever did think of her, but you know the talk. That's how I fix the date. She married old man Warner in the spring, and this was the fall before —not that it's any consequence on earth.

"Dick, he was renting of me then, a m-mean Jew Injun, same like he is now, and getting most his livelihood swapping horses. Parson had a big white mule, they called her Ma'y Jane. She wasn't none too young, but she was terrible strong and spry, and the most remarkable animal for in-intelligence you ever saw. She wasn't exactly *ill*,* as they call it down here, but she had got a

* Ill—ill-tempered, cross. They say of a patient in Arkansas, "He must be getting better, he is so *ill!*"

right smart of tricks like all those old mules—only, being so much cuter, she had more.

"One of her monkey-shines was to always refuse to go past a fence corner. I don't know why, but you couldn't get her past a fence corner no way on earth. If you pushed her *too* hard, she'd begin rearing and kicking, and finally lay plumb down on the ground, her four legs kicking away like boiling water. The only way with her was to get off and pat her and much her, and *lead* her round the corner. Then she was all right, and would step out right well until the *next* corner. Another trick was, she'd take a notion into her head that she had done travelling enough in one direction, and if you didn't politely turn round, she'd like's not run you spang up against a fence-rail and scrape your leg. But the blamedest fool notion she had was about the dinner-horn; whenever she'd hear the Parson's horn go, no matter where the critter might be—middle of the row ploughing, maybe—off she'd go, just the same, bullet line back to the barn. All such like tricks made her, in spite of her cuteness, a sorter uneasy beast for to have on a fyarm. So, Parson 'lowed he'd sell her. He tried to sell her to me, and for some reasons I'd have liked right well to

buy the pesky critter. We'd a screw press then, and I never *did* see a mule on earth could pull down's big a bale as Ma'y Jane, but, Dad gum 'er, —b-begging your pardon for the expression, my dear—if you left her by her lone a minnit, she'd

"Ma'y Jane's little playful ways with fences and dinner-horns."

break the gears, and jest naturally split the mud to the byarn. That's Ma'y Jane! So I wouldn't buy. Well, Parson he didn't know quite how he *could* fix it. Happened one day he was at the store and praising of Ma'y Jane, as usual, and, as

his ill-luck would have it—providentially, I dare-say Pearson would put it—Dick Barnabas came along with a load of cotton. He saw the mule, and Parson looks out of the window, and there's Master Dick studying of his mule. He never let on. But he wags his finger at Unk' Nels and asks if we all didn't want Ma'y Jane up to the press for a spell that morning. Well, of course we did, for she could work powerful well. And just as Unk' Nels was going off Parson says, carelessly, 'Oh, Unk' Nels! If Mr. Dick Barnabas should look round to see how she can pull, I trust you all won't putt her under a bad character.' You had ought to seen that nigger's teeth flash; he hopped onto the notion in a second. All the niggers jest naturally hated Dick always, he used to knock 'em about so. Well, directly Dick sa'nters over to the gin, where he finds Ma'y Jane pulling with all the power, and every nigger praising her. He gits her out and looks her over—oh, we could see him from the store, riding her round and walking about her. Dick was of the opinion nobody knew as much about a horse or a mule as he did. In a little while he goes back to the Parson, with trade in his eye. Kinder old mule; how'll Parson swap? Well, Parson shook his

head, 'lowed he wouldn't trade—valuable mule, very intelligent, perfectly sound, etc. 'That's all right, Parson,' said Dick, growing eager; 'how's my clay back hoss?' 'No, thank you, Mr. Barnabas,' says the Parson; 'looks like we couldn't trade, and I must be going.' So Dick offered some more, but Parson grew cooler, the hotter he grew. 'I'll tell you all about that mule, Mr. Barnabas,' said the Parson, 'her good points and her bad.' 'Naw, ye don't,' says Dick, 'I kin see fur myself, ye ain't no need to praise the critter.' He was so suspicious he 'lowed the Parson meant to lie to him, and he reckoned himself to be smarter. Well, so they had it back and forth, till finally Dick offered two yearling steers that the Parson had been trying to get. Now, Parson knew that was the biggest kind of a trade, and the rest of us was nearly choking with laugh to see Dick getting stuck so neatly; but Parson wasn't going to seem too eager, so he wanted a calf thrown in; and finally they compromised; trade even, and Dick fetch over the steers. He done it that very evening before sundown, he was so possessed to get the mule. And when he discovered Ma'y Jane's little playful ways with fences and dinner-horns, he was the maddest man you ever saw. He was

rarin' and chargin'. Accused the Parson of swindling. I assure you, my dear, I was within an inch of pitching the scoundrel out of the window. Would if I hadn't wanted to hear what Collins would say. He was as cool as cool. 'Softly, softly, Mr. Barnabas,' says he, 'I told you the mule was intelligent—you won't deny she is; and perfectly sound—well, ain't she? And I offered to tell you her good and her bad points, but you wouldn't listen. Is it my fault you wouldn't?' says Parson, while the whole storeful of men laughed. 'But I'll tell you what,' says he, 'if you want to swap over again and have it said that Dick Barnabas rued back, you can.' 'Naw, by ——;' never mind, Dick always did swear like a steamboat captain; he swore a big oath and said he never had rued back, and he never would. The most comical pyart of the story is, Parson had been eying those steers for all summer, and wanting for Dick to trade for a horse he had that was nearly 'bout a hundred years old and a stump-sucker to the bargain, and Dick wouldn't look at it; but he got so terrible sick of Ma'y Jane's deviltry that he traded her off back to Parson for that identical aged horse. It made Dick 'most sick, that trade did. He swore he would get even

with Parson Collins if it took him a hundred years."

"I wonder he hasn't done Mr. Collins a meanness before now," said Mrs. Rutherford.

"Oh, well," said the Colonel, gayly, "even graybacks have got to have some excuse, and Collins is the most popular man in the country. Chaplain all through the war and mighty kind to our boys, and brave as they m-make them. Then he knows more 'bout the beastis than any man around. He's doctored most everybody's horse or colt or cow—never charged a cent; and he's a mighty good, pious man, liberal and stirring, free house to everybody. No, ma'am, I don't guess even Dick could get the boys to do him mean unless they were to get a heap of money by it—and Collins is poor as the next man, nowadays. Why, the feller toted his own cotton to be burned when the order came. That's more than we did, honey, hey?"

"Well, I hope so, Colonel Rutherford," answered the lady. "*You* might have made such a useless sacrifice, but Adèle said General Marmaduke and General Shelby hadn't any right to burn our cotton."

"They did it for the best, undoubtedly, my

dear; still, it certainly was too late, and it has only increased our hardships without helping the Confederacy."

"I don't see, Colonel, why you didn't wait and have the Federal colonel who is coming this way bring our—it."

"The money?" said the colonel, in his jovial loud voice, and Mrs. Rutherford actually had to lay her slim hand over his mouth. He gallantly kissed the fingers.

"I would," said he, "if I'd known I'd have smashed my leg and have to let Della go for me. But it looked like it was a good chance, the money coming far as Crowder's with the Yanks; and if I and half a dozen men could have gone out—but nobody will suspect Jim, nobody knows the money is coming, anyhow. Oh, Jim's safe enough. Don't you reckon *he* had better go out after Fair when he comes?"

"When do you expect Fair?"

"That's the trouble. I cayn't tell. He writes he will start immediately, but when will he get to St. Louis, and from there on here? Don't s-see what we all can do but wait."

"If Fair would only let us know in time," said Mrs. Rutherford, "there's a heap of things he

could fetch us from St. Louis—little things he could bring in his saddle-riders, like soda and needles and pins; but I expect he won't think to do that. Pins we do need the worst; but, now, pepper and spices and thread—he wouldn't have a bit of trouble, if we could only get him word. And vanilla extract, we have been out of such things so long I've nearly forgotten they exist, and we used to call them necessaries."

"Nothing is a necessary but salt," said the Colonel; "we have to get that, *some way*, soon. If it wasn't for the graybacks we could have a boat on the river and supplies regular. My lord, we're licked, and every man who ain't a c-crazy fool knows it! What *is* the use of rarin' and chargin' round the country and burning the cotton? These precious jewels of Dick Barnabas are enough sight worse than the Yankees. Half of them d-deserters, too. Well, I wisht I had another chance at D-Dick!"

There was silence for a little space, because Mrs. Rutherford was absorbed in counting her stitches while the Colonel revolved fresh plans for Barnabas's destruction. From them he looked up again at the picture on the wall, the young girl in her white gown, with her sweet face. Had

he been her lover, finding enough favor in her sight to win her heart from his handsome brother, ten years younger than he? Of all his life, full as it had been of robust exhilaration and ambition and emotion, what time had matched that with its sweetness and its pain! All the inarticulate poetry of the man's nature groped backward toward those years when she was with him. Only three years; Fair was a baby when she died; he could see the little trick playing on the floor with his father's great boots, the sunshine on his curls. The Colonel uttered a sigh like a groan, not conscious that he sighed.

"I reckon Della and Jim will fetch a letter from Fair," said Mrs. Rutherford, quickly, dropping her count.

"He will be grown a young man," said the Colonel; "they tell me he is a young man of very distinguished appearance and an elegant gentleman." The Colonel's diction, become slipshod during years of careless living in the wilderness, had fits of stiffening into that dignity which pertained to a Virginia gentleman's speech when he was young, and, long ago, Mrs. Rutherford had noted that such occasions of fine language were likely to accompany any mention of Fair-

fax. In truth, the Colonel was fonder and prouder (so Mrs. Rutherford often thought) of this lad, who had spent almost all his life away, than of the dutiful sons who had never left him, and who had fought and fallen at his side. She knew that he always carried Fair's letters in his pockets, ready to come out for reading aloud to any one who might be interested in them, and in default of such listener, to be pored over and chuckled over by the Colonel himself. If anything could have irritated her placid amiability it would have been her further knowledge that the Colonel often had gone shabby himself, in order to send money to Fair.

"And he doesn't need it the least bit on earth," was Mrs. Rutherford's silent comment; "Fairfax Rutherford's rich; he gets enormous prices for his pictures, and that rich old aunt left him all her New York property; he has ten times as much as poor Ralph." But she admitted that the Colonel only stinted himself for his Rachel's boy, he never took from the portion of Leah's sons.

"Ralph is right just and upright," said Mrs. Rutherford, "and I don't believe the boys ever suspected he didn't love them just as much as Fair. They thought Fair was the finest young

gentleman in the world, too. Dear boys, they were so good!"

The poor lady felt the tears stinging her eyelids, and rose up hastily on a pretext of hearing Aunt Hizzie. She would not have her husband see her wet eyes. When two people have been through deep sorrow and trouble together, often each, for the other's sake, clings to a makeshift of cheerfulness. It is as if they hung by a board balanced over a precipice; let one loosen his hold, the safety-plank must fly up, and it will be all over with the other.

"There's Hizzie disputing with Unk' Nels again," cried Mrs. Rutherford. Then her simulated interest grew real, for she caught a few words.

"Bad news *you* reckons, does ye? How come ye ain't fotch 'im by tuh *me?*"

A mutter in a man's deeper tones was indistinguishable. Aunt Hizzie's voice rose again:

"Naw, ye wun't go tell ole marse or ole miss, needer. 'Pears like ye ain't got no sense. Whut ye sayin'? Ye talk so gross nobuddy on yearth kin foller you' wuds—mum—mum—mumble—mum! Folkses got good sense cayn't, let 'lone igits. Lemme talk tuh 'im!"

Up went Hizzie's voice, as if she were talking to a foreigner or a deaf man. "Ye seekin' Miss Della, Slick Mose? Ole Miss? Ole Miss fo' sho'? Look at de critter, Nels. Well, *sah!* dar's blood all over 'im, sho's you bawn, Nels."

"My Lord, is there more affliction for this unhappy house?" the Colonel groaned, involuntarily struggling to rise.

"Oh, hush," said Mrs. Rutherford, soothing him, although she was visibly paler and trembled; "you stay still. It's only Slick Mose. I'll go out."

In the gallery a negro man and woman were staring at a truly hideous figure. It was the shape of a man, ragged, soaked, with blood-stains on the arms and on the tattered shirt; a crouching thin thing, bareheaded and barefooted; and wound about the creature's neck, a gleaming and hissing snake. The face, with its tangle of pale red hair, its little vacant eyes and working mouth, held the plain signs of Slick Mose's unhappy condition. He was an idiot lad whom Mr. Collins had found chained to a staple in his father's yard, and had given a good mule to rescue. He divided his time between the plantation and Mr. Collins's farm, and Adèle Rutherford was the only person, save

"And wound about the creature's neck, a gleaming and hissing snake."

the minister, who had any control over him. These two he would follow and obey like a dog. They understood the gibberish which passed for speech with him. The creature had a mania for hiding things, and so cunningly that it was the rarest thing in the world for them to be found unless Parson Collins or Adèle interfered. Thanks to them, his idiosyncrasy did little mischief. Another trait was his grewsome liking for snakes. Between him and all the brute creation existed a strange sort of understanding, such as sometimes does exist between the lowest order of human kind and animals; but Mose peculiarly affected snakes. Half the terror the harmless, timid fellow inspired (and it was excessive) was due to this trait. For the other half, came his extraordinary physical agility and his uncanny wood lore, mocking the beasts' calls so well that they would answer him; familiar with every lead of timber* and every glade in the swag;† climbing like a raccoon and diving like an eel. Mrs. Rutherford shared the general shrinking, although she had always been kind to Mose. Now he ran

* Timber grows in kinds on the Black River, here oaks, now ash, now gum; such a strip is called a lead.

† Low, damp place.

to her, pulled at her gown, grovelled at her feet, and pointed toward the door, all the while uttering a harsh, inarticulate cry. "Lada," he repeated numberless times. Lada was his word for Adèle. It was supposed to be his effort to say "Lady." Then, gesticulating wildly, he poured out a torrent of incoherent sounds, of which the word "kill" was the only one to be distinguished.

"Who is killed?" cried Mrs. Rutherford. "Not—not Della?" In her sudden agony of anxiety she grasped Mose's shoulder.

He shook his head violently.

Instantly Mrs. Rutherford's fears flew to the money, the loss of which, indeed, meant nearly ruin to them. "Is it Jim Fowler?" she asked; "try, Mose, *try* to speak plain!"

Again the idiot shook his head, and with a look of agony repeated "Parson," "kill," and "Fair."

He clasped his hands together, shrieking, "Oh, Fair! oh, Fair!" He extended his arms, the most violent grief and horror depicted on his countenance. Finally, he hurled himself on his knees and appeared to be straining to lift something from the ground.

"Dat Slick Mose aimin' tuh tell we uns how somebuddy done!" exclaimed Aunt Hizzie.

"Lord send nothing has happened to Fair," cried Mrs. Rutherford; "if there has it will kill the Colonel. But one thing is sure; he wants us to follow him, and we've got to do it."

III.

THE condition of Fairfax's mind after he left Fowler's house was one of bewildered excitement. Nothing like this experience had ever been imagined by him before. He was such a child when his uncle took him that, to all intents and purposes, he had ceased to be an American. His uncle, a very rich man as well as a distinguished artist, was deeply attached to him, and he had been reared delicately and luxuriously.

Every one petted the beautiful boy, especially women. But treatment apt to ruin a coarser or more selfish nature simply made Fairfax more gentle, and gave him a pleasurable impression of all the world being an honest fellow's friend.

So the lad flung his centimes to beggars and enjoyed their blessings even while he smiled at them, and looked frankly up into the great ladies' eyes, no whit the worse for his constant doses of adulation. He was twenty-two the other day, never having been in love. Naturally, shrined

in his fancy was a radiant, high-born creature, mistress of several languages, with a velvet voice and a beautiful nature, an angel of varying nationality; but she was hardly more than a dream of the sex, the "not impossible she" of every young man's imagination. And certainly the last of women whom he thought about in such a connection was his homespun cousin Adèle. Still, now and again, across the confusion of his emotions and his efforts to think the situation out images would flit—a white throat tinted by the firelight, and a supple figure in a light pose, and a rapt young face flung back, and dark eyes flashing. Her head was like Antinous's, had Antinous been his own sister and able to shut his mouth tight. (I am giving Fairfax's whimsical comparison, not mine; I doubt whether Miss Adèle had anything Greek about her beyond a low forehead and a straight nose.)

She had a wonderfully sweet voice, too—slow and soft, yet not monotonous; really it idealized the accent. And how fascinating was that frequent gesture of hers, opening the palms of her hands and flinging them out, with a sort of gentle vehemence!

Somehow her poor gown only threw a kind of

distinction about her appearance into relief. The idea of Adèle turning out such a beauty!

All the while Betty Ward was covering the ground in gallant form, taking advantage of every piece of solid footing to quicken her pace. He had come to the sandy high-road; in a few moments she would be out in the open, clear of the dreary, overgrown, murderous woods. He began to think of his father and the old house, and his dead brothers seemed to look at him with their boyish eyes.

Why should the mare tremble? It was a second before he realized. He had lurched forward in the saddle; there had been the ping of a bullet, he felt a stabbing pain in his shoulder; then another shot made a crackling noise; he was galloping on in the dark. Were there pursuers?

He could not hear them; but on and on the frightened horse whirled him, past the black lines of forest. It seemed to him that they travelled a long distance before he was able, with his useless right arm, to control her panic.

Directly in front of him he perceived a light, which wavered, rising and sinking like a lantern carried by a rider. Such, in fact, it was, for he

could hear a very good barytone voice singing an old Presbyterian hymn:

> "'My table thou hast furnishèd,
> In presence of my foes;
> My head with oil thou dost anoint,
> And my cup overflows.'

"Whoa! quit that, Ma'y Jane!"

Both riders fell to quieting their beasts. Betty Ward neighed and pranced, and Ma'y Jane, a large white mule, responded with a great noise of bray and show of heels.

"Look a here," shouted the mule's rider, "ain't this Colonel Rutherford's Betty Ward? Ma'y Jane never speaks to any other horse she meets up with. Say, who are you, sir?"

"Don't you know me, Mr. Collins?" Fairfax, who could see the other distinctly, called back. "I am Fairfax Rutherford."

With a bound Ma'y Jane was alongside Betty Ward, and her rider was wringing Fairfax's unwounded arm, pouring out a torrent of welcome. "I *am* glad to see you—rejoiced! Your poor father, sir, has had heavy afflictions, and nothing has comforted him like the news you were to come—look a here, boy, what's the matter with your shoulder?"

Parson Collins lifted his lantern.

"Well, *sir!* You've got hurt already. Who did it? When did it happen?"

Fairfax rapidly explained. He had suddenly been struck by a new idea. Jim Fowler's sacrifices possessed his imagination. Only now it was his turn to deceive the slayers. How badly hurt he might be he could not tell; he fancied the wound more serious than it actually was, feeling so faint and giddy and knowing nothing about gunshot wounds. Should he go on, the guerillas might follow and capture him, or he might roll off his horse and lie there in the wood, a prey to any comer; should he go with Collins, the same peril menaced them. But could he persuade the minister to take the money while he galloped on, tracking his way by that bleeding shoulder, it was he whom they would follow, and, whatever happened to him, the money would be safe.

Therefore, on the heels of his rapid words he pulled out the money and asked Parson Collins to receive it: protesting that he had enough money of his own to satisfy the graybacks, were they to catch him.

"They can't know anything about my having the money," said he; "I daresay they only

shot at me for my clothes or my boots or my horse."

"They're mean enough," said Parson Collins; "wonder if we all couldn't fight 'em. I've got a splendid revolver, and the Lord is on our side—if there ain't too many of 'em," he added, practically; "do you reckon there'll be more than four of 'em?"

"I only heard the shot. It smashed the lantern."

"Lucky for you it did. You'd ought to have put it out—you in the light and they in the dark, making the best kind of a target of yourself."

He flung his own coat-skirt, a rusty black broadcloth one, over his own lantern; his rugged, kindly face, framed in waving white hair, smiled on Fairfax, and went out in the darkness. Only the indistinct silhouette of a horseman remained.

"Might as well not stick up a sign-post for 'em," said Mr. Collins. "Now, Mr. Rutherford, with the Lord's help, we'll fool these vilyuns. I expect you have been bleeding of your shoulder making a trail. You ride ahead for a spell. Moon's out, and it's coming on light enough to see a mite. You'll come to a slash with a burned tupello-gum standing chalk white and black in

the water. You cayn't miss. Stop there and slip off into the water—good bottom, no fear—and get jes' behind that tree and wait on me. I know a short cut to Montaigne; and I can find the way on the grass even without a lantern, so they cayn't see me. If they are behind us now, they have seen my lantern go out, and will 'low I have turned into the woods. Now farewell, sir, for the present."

"But take the money!" urged Fairfax.

Parson Collins hesitated, but muttering, "Who knows? The Colonel cayn't afford to lose it, for a fact," held out his hand for the package.

Having received it, the white mule bounded into the wood.

They were as utterly gone, that dark night, as if they had never been; and the only sound which came to Fairfax was the swift thud of Betty Ward's hoof on the sand. It is a feature of the Black River country that it lies in ridges. On the ridges the roads are good, between them they are swamps; hence a road which threatens to mire a horse at every step may all at once climb into a smooth, dry highway. Sand, drifted into the soil in some of the very richest farming lands, helps the geographical peculiarities of the country.

Fairfax seemed to be galloping on a floor. By this time he was so faint with his wound and the motion, which felt to him like a pump drawing the blood out of his body through his shoulder, that he could only dimly distinguish objects as he was whirled along. Wasn't that a blasted white trunk? He pulled on the reins, but his weak fingers were numb; the horse did not recognize his voice; he could not stop her. On fire with fright, her wide nostrils sniffing the home air, she raced past the trysting-place like the wind.

Half a mile farther, so near that Fairfax's blurring eyes could see the early morning lights of the plantation, Betty Ward flung up her beautiful head and leaped high above the thorn-tree felled across the road. But her rider lay motionless on the other side.

"Cotch the hoss, Sam, d—— you," bawled a voice out of the trees, "don't hurt 'er, you ——!"

"Cayn't cotch 'er, 'less with a *gun*," Sam growled back; "will I shoot?"

"Naw, d—— you, she done throwed *him* all right, an' I wunt have 'er hurted! Lige, try the rope!"

"Lige done cotched 'er!" Sam's voice called back, amid a prodigious scuffling and shouts of

"Whoa!" and "Huh!" Evidently both men were struggling with the horse.

The leader, bidding them show a light, crossed to their assistance. Sure that the horse was unharmed, he returned to Fairfax, who lay like a log in the road.

"Dead's * a hammer, ain't he, Mack?" said he, carelessly.

"Ya'as, but he's 'live yet."

"Are it young Rutherford?"

"Looks like. Got the funniest cloze on I ever did see."

"Hole the light. We'll see if we ain't got the money *this* time."

He bent over the insensible man and nimbly stripped him. As he did so he outlined, against the torch-flare, a sharp profile with thin lips, curved nose, hollow cheeks, a sweeping mustache, and inky locks of hair, straight and coarse enough to warrant the common taunt that "all of Dick Barnabas wasn't Jew was mean Injun." He wore a smart military hat and a blue Federal blouse, in very good order; but below the belt, where the United States eagle shone, were two veteran pairs

* "Dead" is a synonym for senseless, in Arkansas.

"Dead's a hammer, aint he, Mack."

of trousers of Confederate gray, one above the other, and the nether pair almost as much to the fore as the upper, owing to tears and holes.

Barnabas needed only a few moments to discover that the Rutherford money was not on Fairfax's person.

He did not swear. Swearing, with Dick Barnabas, expressed rather a jocose frame of mind than otherwise. He rose silently, and stood stroking his eyebrows down on to the bridge of his nose, and considered.

"Say, Sam," Lige whispered to his comrade, "I wudn't be in that ar young cuss's shoes, not ef ye'd give me the money——"

"What's he studyin', do ye reckon?"

"*Hell!*" was Lige's concise but ample reply.

"Didn't the cunnel done 'im a meanness when they ben in the army, hay?"

"He'd of shot him, if he hadn't skedaddled. Had ever'thing ready an' him under gyuard."

"Well, *sir!* What fur?"

"Oh, jest jawhawkin' a Yank and burnin' his heouse down. Thar ben a young un in the heouse an' the old man ben mad. Say, what's Dick a-doin'? Looks interestin'."

Barnabas had taken the gold out of Fairfax's

money-belt and was parcelling it out with the strict fairness which, whether out of shrewdness or a better motive, he never failed to use with his plunder. The little velvet boxes containing the brooch and bracelet brought from London to Mrs. Rutherford and Adèle, the trinkets for the old servants, and the watch for the Colonel were set aside "fur the pile" (Dick's word, perhaps, for a common stock), to be divided at leisure. Fairfax's English revolvers the guerilla leader stowed in his own belt; the money-belt he flung to one of the men. "Now fur the cloze," said he; "them pants strikes me heavy. Say, you Mack, pull 'em off."

Lige was tossed Fairfax's hat; Sam got his coat; his flannel shirt went to Mack. While the other men were trying to squeeze their feet into his boots, and laughing and disputing over the contents of his portmanteau, his dressing-case, his undergarments, and his handkerchiefs, the poor lad began to revive.

To awaken from a swoon is always a painful sensation. The soul returns to the body somewhat as separated cars are coupled to a locomotive —with a jar that shakes both. But to awaken, lying wounded and shaken, plucked like a dead

turkey, and to stare up at such a devilish grin of satisfied malice and fury as that which contorted Dick's lips—there is an experience to wrench the nerves.

Fairfax shut his eyes; he forced back a groan.

"Don't like my looks, hay?" said the guerilla; "I'll be a right smart prettier when I get them pants er yourn onto me. Look a yere, I ain't no time fur funnin'; I am Dick Barnabas. Whar's that ar twenty thousan' dollars?"

"I—I haven't any twenty thousand dollars," Fairfax managed to gasp, painfully.

"Ef ye have, you mus' keep it unner you' skin, by ——," was the grim answer; "whar's it at?"

"I don't know," said Fairfax.

"Look a yere, boy," said Dick, dropping his voice to a lower key which somehow had a sinister and ominous effect, and incessantly stroking his eyebrows, "you've *got* to know. It's wuth you' *life*, that's what it's wuth. You answer my questions true and straight, an' you' paw'll meet up with ye t'night. You don't, an' I'll kill you! *An' it wunt be nice—easy—killin', either.*"

"I can't tell what I don't know," said Fairfax.

"Looks like he got grit, don't it?" Lige muttered.

Fairfax's hearing, which was in the abnormal state of keenness accompanying certain conditions of nervous strain, caught the words.

His sensitive mouth quivered a little. Too vague for shaping in words, a sensation rather than a feeling, something like this was in his dizzied brain:

"All my boyhood I feared that I was a coward; I forgot it when I had nothing to make me afraid, but the old dread met me as soon as I touched the old swamp; now, now I am in mortal peril—oh, thank God, thank God, I am not afraid!"

Was he not afraid? He was trembling, and the cold drops in the roots of his hair ran down his forehead. No, he was not afraid, not as he had been afraid in his childhood; that hideous paralysis of will and muscle, that ecstasy of utterly unreasonable, unreachable terror—he did not feel *that*.

"Wa'al," said Barnabas, "made up you' mind? Spit it out!"

Fairfax looked him in the eye without flinching; he said not a word.

Dick Barnabas never would have won his evil fame had he simply had wickedness and courage; there was a vein of acuteness in his mind, and

such sagacity as makes a good off-hand, rough guess at character. Besides, he had known the Rutherfords for years.

"Look a yere," he continued, in quite another tone, "I ain't no friend to Rutherfords, but they all are high-toned gentlemen; I never knowed nare Rutherford wud tell a lie. Ef you'll say, on your honor's a gentleman, that ye doan' know nuthin' beout that money, I give ye my word, on *mine*, ye kin lope Mack's hoss and light out. Kin ye?"

Their eyes met; the cruel old-race black ones, the frank brown eyes of the Anglo-American; the glitter in each crossed under the torch-rays like sword-blades, but it was the brown flash that wavered. Fairfax compressed his lips.

"You *cayn't!*" shouted the guerilla. He wheeled round on the listening men. "Say, Mack, how's that fire you all putt out* in the woods for a warm?"

Mack, a thoroughly brutal-looking fellow, jerked a snort of laughter out of his short throat.

"Doin' *fine*," said he, "right smart er coalses."

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* They always "putt out" a fire when they make it, in Arkansas.

IV.

DEEP in the dense forests surrounding the farms and cotton-fields of Montaigne there still may be seen a ragged clearing. The gum-trees and white-oaks, the cypress and tupello-gums and hackberry-trees, are like a wall growing out of the wet land about it, for the clearing itself rises high and dry.

Grotesque cypress knees grin out of the water like a jagged saw. In autumn, gorgeous red and gold stars from the gum-trees, duller red leaves from the long, hanging hackberry branches, rusty needles of foliage from the cypress, and vivid green arrow-heads from the water-oaks, fleck that black and gleaming mirror with its ghosts of trees.

Often one will see a white crane standing on one leg at the edge of the brake, espying its food.

The clearing may hold a couple of acres. It is covered, now, by a wild growth of elbow-brush, pawpaw saplings, muscadine vines, and swamp hackberries. "Tar blankets" flap their great leaves above their prickly sides. When spring

comes, the "buckeye" bells swing like tongues of flame among the greenery. Yet, strange to see in such a wilderness, here and again a cotton-plant penetrates the tangle, and, during the first October days, flings out its ragged flag of truce to winter. Once, only the cotton-plants were to be seen. Then, on the mound to the right, which was a forgotten chief's last show of pride, an old Frenchman had built him a log cabin, where he lived alone.

He came up the river in his own clumsy boat, leased land from Colonel Rutherford, cleared it, in the wasteful fashion of the country, by girdling and burning the trees; and had a house to take the place of his tent of boughs and blankets within a month of his first axe-stroke.

His lease of the place was short. For some reason Dick Barnabas became persuaded that the lonely tenant had money—gold and greenbacks. He came in the spring and "made a crop"—and, the following summer, when all his field was blossoming in pink and white, a chance messenger from Montaigne found the cabin a heap of smoking embers, and the Frenchman's body in the swamp. How he died no one rightly knew, but there were tales of torture as well as murder; and

certain it is that the man who found the mangled body told his tale with sobs and oaths; nor could he ever be persuaded to set foot on the place again. The cotton-field had holes all over it, where the guerillas must have digged for hidden treasures. In one of these holes, widened and lengthened by his own spade, Barnabas's victim lies to this day.

Why Dick should choose the spot for his rendezvous his men could not understand. They were merely ordinary desperadoes—the scum of warfare and a wild country, some of them hardly as bad as that, being disbanded soldiers or deserters who had joined the "graybacks," intending to plunder in patriotic fashion, and harass only the Federals and Federal sympathizers—but had drifted into an ever-widening whirlpool of crime. They had no stomach for torture and murder in themselves, however necessary to wring money from their victims; and they would willingly have thrust certain black passages out of memory. La Rouge's cries stuck in their ears.

Dick told them that he chose the place because it was a spot held accursed and haunted.

"Ef they all see the smoke, so much the better," he jeered.

But the men exchanged furtive glances.

"'Tain't nuthin' for laffin' baout"—Lige's opinion, as usual, was confided to his crony Sam—"they does see smoke a-risin' an' hear screechin' an' nare mortial critter nigh. Ya'as, sir."

"Mout of ben aowls," suggested Sam, who was hard-headed and not superstitious.

"Does aowls holler French lingo?" Lige retorted. "An' how come them buzzards will sail an' sail overhaid? They didn't useter! Sam, I are sick er this yere."

"Look a' *him*," said Sam; "he ain't consarnin' hisself much, be he?"

"He is the *devil*," said Lige.

Perhaps to win from his ruffians just this very mixture of fear and admiration and wonder may have belonged to Barnabas's motives.

At any rate, it is a question if he were not cunning in bringing Fairfax here. Had he proceeded to extremities while the young man's will was strung to its highest tension to resist, he might have been balked. Fairfax always believed that he could have held out *then*.

But the long ride through the brake in darkness and silence, bound, helpless, stabbed by every stumble, was too much for the poor boy's nerve.

Barnabas led the way. Not a word was spoken. Fairfax could think, could realize the full horror of his position.

Creeping—creeping—the old numbness of terror, the hand on his throat, the chill in his veins —oh, if he could only die, he thought, before those beasts began on him!

They were half an hour going from the road to La Rouge's cabin, riding straight as the crow flies. Sometimes they trotted on high ground covered with cotton-stalks, sometimes the horses were up to their knees in the bog; and once Fairfax felt a heave of his mule's flanks and heard the swash of waters as if the animal were swimming. He tried to collect his thoughts, he tried to pray, but his mind would wander. It is likely that he was taken with a chill, having travelled for days through an air laden with miasma; and with the pain from his wound and the loss of blood he was half-delirious.

His thoughts were only a jumble of hideous pictures. What was the story that he had been told about Barnabas at Jacksonport? Pulling out a man's nails was too mediæval! And the other —ugh, that was worse! When he was a little, little child, Mammy used to tell horrible stories.

How they terrified him! That one, of the big conjure-men who threw lizards into Mammy's mother so that she died—but that was not so frightful as the one about the little black cat without a head that would come and sit by a "mean" boy's bed and purr and purr; and, if the boy should make the least bit of noise, would leap on the bed and rub its dreadful neck against him. What a ghastly fancy! Why must he remember it now?

Adèle didn't believe in the cat. She jumped out of the bed and lit a light and ran into Fair's room to look under the bed. She called "Pussy! pussy!" very loud; and there wasn't anything under the bed, and she sat down beside Fair and held the trembling little creature in her strong, warm arms until he fell asleep. Was he a coward yet?

"Halt!" rang out Barnabas's thin, high voice. They had arrived at the camp. The camp-fire was blazing against a log.

"Rake out them coalses!" commanded Barnabas.

Mack and a small dark man, said to be Barnabas's cousin, were the only men that bestirred themselves. Four or five other men stood sul-

lenly, agreeing to any wickedness of their leader but not anxious to help.

Lige scowled and whispered to Sam that he had a mind to kick, he warn't no Injun, by ——.

"Twenty thousan' dollars are a right smart er money," said Sam, "an' only ten of us to git it." And Lige sank into moody silence.

When Fairfax was lifted from his horse, his cramped limbs refused to support him; he fell in a heap on the ground.

"Feller's chillin', shore," the small dark man observed to Barnabas.

"Nev' mind, Ziah, he'll be warm enough right soon," answered Barnabas, with a leer; "I'll scorch him for five hundred!" which saying has passed into a common word in that country.

Then he addressed himself to Fairfax: "D'ye see them coalses, Bud? They're all fer *you*, ever' last one, twell ye tell whar that money's at or you're daid—one!"

The skies had cleared and the moon was rolling high in the heavens, while far toward the east was a faint lightening, the promise of the dawn.

Fairfax cast his frenzied eyes round the dark circle of figures. "Are you *all* fiends?" he cried.

Sam gripped Lige's arm, whispering: "Shut

up! he's fixin' tuh give in. Don't you make a fool of you'seff!"

"I reckon," said Barnabas, coolly. "Now, Bud, this yere's the last time er axin'. *Whar's hit at?*"

. . . . . .

Five minutes later, the moon at this time shining brightly, an eye-witness would have noticed that Barnabas's men, not clean enough to grow pale, were drawing their breath quickly and hard. Lige held his hand before his nostrils. Sam, in spite of the twenty thousand dollars, could not keep his eyes on one hissing and glowing spot of light, over which Mack's coarse face and great shoulders kept stooping. Far less could he bear to look at a distorted, white young face and writhing chest.

But a horrible and engrossing interest kept every other eye on that awful wrestle between physical torment and a man's will.

Barnabas lifted his finger. Mack's pan of coals was stopped midway.

"Now, look a yere, Mister Rutherford," said Dick, in a quiet, conversational tone, "you' doin' a mighty fool thing gittin' you'seff all burned up this a way. Wich do you reckon you' paw

is a wantin' most, that ar money or his onlies' son?"

It is the chief and besetting temptation of a many-sided, tolerant nature that, however much it has risked on any course of action, such action may all at once present itself under an entirely different aspect. Suddenly his own conduct appeared to Fairfax strained and ridiculous. Why throw away his life? His uncle would pay his father back that money. Only let him buy his way out of this agony.

He tried to catch at some semblance of spirit in his defeat. "I daresay you're right," he said, holding his words steady by a tremendous effort.

"In co'se I'm right, Mr. Rutherford," said Dick. "Say, I'll make you a fa'r offer. You tell me all ye know, an' the minnit we git the money you kin light out."

"I gave it to some one else."

"Who? Aw speak out, we wunt hurt him if he gives up the money."

Then Fairfax told. He had given the money to Mr. Collins. He did not know where Mr. Collins had gone.

Dick Barnabas's eyes glittered. "Parson Collins, hay? We'll find him quick nuff. Gether

some pawpaw strips, will ye, Race? H'ist 'em on his mewl, an' tie the young gen'lman up, com-f'table. Fling some trash on that fire, Mack. Now, boys!"

The loose branches and cotton-stalks, "trash" in the vernacular, shot up a ruddy column, by the light of which the brilliant masses of gum-tree foliage and the tall cypress trunks started out of the night; and the waters gleamed like molten steel beneath the trees, or splashed into white spherules under the horses' feet. One by one each horse or mule plunged into the brake, and the muffled noise of wading would come back.

"I are cl'ar on one p'int," said Lige to Sam, taking advantage of their position in the rear, "I ain't gwine roast er stick Ole Man Collins that guv me a hoss in the war and nussed we uns in the hospital. Naw, sir—not fur forty thousan' dollars. An' Mis' Collins, when she was 'live an' I ben a little trick, she guv me a ginger pone, onct. An' don' ye 'member how, when he ben chaplin in the ole man's rigimint, how he wud be a-holpin' the doctors with the wyoundid, a trottin' raoun' not heedin' the bullets nare more'n gum-balls?"

"Ya'as, that's so, fur a fact," acquiesced Sam.

Lige warmed in praise of a hero of his childhood. "An' what a hunter he is—shoot the wink offen you' eye! An' he knows more 'baout beasts than are man on earth; he does so. Look a' Dick Barnabas a-ridin' Betty Ward this way kase Bailey got the big shoulder; Bailey wudn't 'a' *had* the big shoulder ef he'd of fotched him right straight t' the Parson. Naw, he cud cure him hisseff, he cud; now, look a' the hoss! You better believe Parson knows more'n a day'n Dick done all his life. Say, ain't ye never heerd how he set the hide on Dick with that mewl trade?"

"Ya'as, sir," said Sam, shaking his head, "he *is* slick at a trade. Dear, dear, dear, ain't it turrible fur t' hev t' do a man like that mean! But twud be turrible t' lose all that money tew. 'Clare I cayn't tell wich 'ud be the most turribler!"

"Who's that fool gabbin'?" a fierce whisper demanded. Thereupon both men were silent. They had emerged from the swamp and were riding through a high, fertile region of farming lands. Just in front of them was a whitewashed wooden house, with a gambrel roof, like most Arkansas houses in the country at that date.

It was not a large house; but there was a

certain air of prosperity in the neatness and repair of all its belongings, and the presence about the yard or "gallery" of various primitive conveniences, such as sections of cypress logs sawed level for horse-blocks, a trough hollowed out of a log by the pump to keep the milk cool, a "hitchin'-bar" made of a young iron-tree and slung across two posts of the same wood, a "dish-rag" vine climbing up the porch-lattice, some gourds swinging from nails in the house-wall, and a churn back in the gallery, where hung a very good saddle and a powder-flask.

The light of the fire and a flicker from a single "grease lamp" seemed to indicate that some one was at home.

The band silently surrounded the house. "He'll shore git off ef he makes a break, *my way*," Lige found time to remark to Sam.

"Me too," said Sam.

But, apparently, the minister had no intention of flight. He opened the door to their first summons.

Many a man in that wicked company remembered afterward how he looked; an old man, but hale and vigorous, and greeting them with his every-day shrewd smile.

"Walk in, gentlemen," said he; "what can I do for you all?"

The men swaggered in with vast bluster and curses, howling for the money.

As soon as the uproar had abated a little: "Now, gentlemen," said Parson Collins, "there ain't no need of you all rarin' and chargin' and taking the name of the Lord in vain; *I* ain't an army."

"Noner you' monkeyin'," snarled Dick; "you' pardner done guv ye 'way. You got the money. Whar's it at?"

"I am right grieved to see you in this condition, Mr. Rutherford," said Parson Collins, "I am so——"

So weak was Fairfax that the tears rose to his eyes at the words; he spoke bitterly: "If I have gotten *you* into any trouble, Mr. Collins, I shall wish I had let them kill me. But they promised to let you go free if you will give up the money. I release you. I beg you tell them where it is——"

"Now you'r talkin', Bud," bawled Mack, slapping Fairfax on his wounded shoulder. Barnabas savagely told Collins to make haste and show them where the money was hidden. "If you will do

that, Mist' Collins," he added, with a swift change from his frantic vaporings to his suavest manner, a shadow of that wheedling obsequiousness which is the trade-mark of the worst of his father's race, "ef you will, I will be happy ter 'low a gentleman I respect so much t' git off all right. You'll fin' me squar' ef you'll act squar'."

Brother Collins appeared to consider. He rubbed the palms of his hands together and wrinkled his eyelids, half shutting his eyes, just as his manner was when revolving a horse-trade.

"Well," he said, "I don't mind admitting that I *did* have the money."

"An' ye got it now," said Dick.

"No, sir, not one cent."

A vile oath burst from Mack, and two or three of the guerillas were for roughly handling the minister; but Dick restrained them. His swarthy skin had turned a dull red; and his fingers crept up to his eyebrows. He asked Parson Collins to whom he gave the money.

"And if I don't tell you, you all will torture and kill me, I expect," replied the Parson, no whit disturbed.

"I reckon," said Dick.

They looked at each other.

"Oh, d—— it all, ain't he got grit?" Lige gasped.

"But—if I do tell you?"

"Ef ye tell me all ye know 'baout it, who ye guv it ter, an' when, an' how, I swar I wunt hurt a hair er you' haid nur let nare one er my men hurt ye, neether."

"For God's sake, tell him, Mr. Collins," cried Fairfax.

"And—you won't rue back?"

"Ye know I never did rue back, an' I never will."

Was it possible that a grim smile was curling the Parson's lips? His big fingers slipped down under the bony knuckles and interlaced.

"It's a trade?" said he.

"It's a trade," said Dick.

"Well, to tell you all the plain truth, then"—Parson Collins wore his pulpit expression prefatory of a good story—"when I heard you coming I became alarmed, and—I gave the money to Slick Mose!"

Disappointed as they were, half the men grinned; every man of them knew that they couldn't follow Mose into the swamps; even if they did, the chances were that they would stop at a rattle-

snake's den, where Mose's playfellows were crawling over the bank-notes. Parson Collins might as well have flung them into Running Water for any hope the guerillas could see of getting them. Yet the humor which redeems the most degraded Westerners helped these ruffians to a sardonic relish of their own discomfiture.

"Got the dead wood on ye agin, Dick," said one of the men. "That ar's the best aout at tradin' you ever did make, Parson," shouted Horace, while Fairfax, half dead though he was with exhaustion and agony, could not restrain a hysterical laugh.

"Slick Mose—that's Who," continued Parson Collins, running his shrewd eye down the line of murderous faces with that same air of addressing an audience and speaking in his distinct, rapid, pulpit tone. "When I perceived your approach, or, rather, when Mose, who was providentially present—come for persimmons—did, I said to myself —in the words of the hymn—'a charge to keep I have,' and it ain't safe to keep it; so I committed the package to Mose, and he jumped out of that window to the right. That, gentlemen, is the How. I did not look, and I do not know in which direction he went."

"Doan' see's thar's anythin' leff fur we uns but 'cept t' light out," said Lige. "Parson done skinned us *fine!*"

Dick gave him an evil glance. Yet his words were not vindictive.

"I sayd nare un er we all would hurt a h'ar er you' haid, Parson. An' I ain't gwine tuh rue back. Reckon ye wunt refuse tuh look a' Bailey's big shoulder a minnit now. You Lige, an' Race an' Brad, go back fas' ye kin tuh the boys on the road an' bid 'em wait on me thar. Tell 'em how we was done. Mack, you an' Sam an' Lum Case stay yere—you in co'se, tew"—nodding to his cousin. "Burn the wind, now! I'll be raoun' mighty briefly."

The men obeyed, with one exception; Lige answered, sulkily:

"I'd ruther stay yere."

In spite of his seeming apathy, Dick's Indian blood was at boiling-point. Lige stood in front of the open window; before he had time to realize the situation he found himself sprawling on the ground outside.

"When I tell my men ter go, I 'low fur ter have 'em," said Dick, coolly.

"You'll pay for this," Lige growled.

Without another word he gathered himself up, mounted his horse, and rode away—not with the troop. He only rode to the belt of sycamores beyond the fence before he deliberately turned his horse.

Out to the right, in front of the house, a flame had leaped up, illumining a little patch of ground—and figures of men moved across the light; they seemed to be occupied with the black horse.

Lige cautiously skirted his way through the woods into a clump of pecan-trees. He had left his horse, half way, tied to a tree. In the dark himself, he could see every movement of the group by the fire.

A peaceful enough group it was, to all appearances. Brother Collins was fomenting the black's "big shoulder;" the others watched him; Mack still guarded Fairfax.

Dick called to one of the men to lead the horse away; simultaneously some quick signal of his was obeyed by three men falling on Brother Collins and skilfully binding him. The old man, surprised though he was, made a stout fight, delivering such a whole-souled buffet to one assailant that it bowled him over into the fire. But

presently he was overcome, and tied to a tree by pawpaw strips like those that held Fairfax. During the tussle Dick was shouting continually that they should not hurt him. "Nev' mind how he does ye," was his cry, "doan' hurt a ha'r er his haid!"

"Now then," he continued, "you Mack, hole up that feller's arm. Holp 'im, Ziah. Put the gun in 'is hand an' hold 'is arm studdy a-p'intin' at Brother Collins' heart. Cayn't ye sight no better? Thar ye be, slick's a scalded hoeg! Parson, I never rue back. We ain't hurted a h'ar er you' haid, nur we don't aim tew. But thar ain't nare man livin' shall make their brags that they skinned Dick Barnabas twicet in a trade. Mr. Fairfax Rutherford, if ye pull that trigger, *an' hit the myark*, ye kin ride off free. If ye don't, killin's ain't tuh be compared with how I'll do ye. Thar's plenty more coalses."

"And killing ain't to be compared with the punishment that's waiting on you all in the world to come," shouted the undaunted preacher, "pore misguided, bloody sinners that you are! You ride fast, but Death will catch you, and ayfter death—the judgment!"

"Oh, Lord, ain't he chuckful er grit!" moaned

"If ye pull that trigger, an' hit the myark, ye can ride off free."

the unseen listener, in an anguish of admiration.

Dick Barnabas knew too much of the Parson's rough eloquence to let the fiery words flow on.

"Shet up!" he yelled, "or I'll roll that feller thar in the fire."

The Parson looked at Fairfax compassionately.

"Dick," said he, very gently, "I'll give ye back the right to shoot *me*, if you'll let the pore boy off. You got the best of the trade, then."

"Naw, sir," said Dick, "I don't, nur you don't neether."

"Don't worry about me, Mr. Collins," Fairfax spoke up feebly, but with a show of spirit—only the show, poor fellow—"I'm about finished, now; these devils can't make me suffer long. Forgive me for bringing this on you, and tell my father to forgive me too. Give him my love——"

"That'll do, Bud," interrupted Dick, in his softest tones, which had a squeak reminding one of the noise made by a rusty saw toiling through a log; "you spoke you' speech fine. Ziah, pull a thorn off that ar tree an' stick that piece er white paper over Parson's heart. Mack——"

He only made a gesture with his finger at the coals, looking Fairfax coldly and cruelly in the eye.

There was that in his look paralyzing the will like a snake's bite. Desperately Fairfax rallied his sinking courage; all his being concentrated into one throb of defiance: "I will not, I will not, I will not."

So, shutting his eyes, he heard the words say themselves over in his brain. He thought nothing else, not of his father, not of the brave old man so basely done to death, not of the mortal ignominy to be his if he failed; only tight-clinching his free hand, blind, deaf, his soul clung to those words:

"I will not, I will not, I will not."

"Now, Mack, *ready!*" called the cruel, thin voice. "Last show, Bud!"

A pain that goaded every tortured nerve into revolt; worse, worse than the pain, the sickening, familiar terror—he tried to cry, "I will not, I will not;" he was crying it in his soul.

Dick, who stood obliquely at a little distance in front of the fire, bent for another shovel of coals.

At the same instant came a man's scream, and the crack of a pistol.

Parson Collins's head fell forward on his chest; only a stained and blackened shred remained of the white spot over his heart. Behind the trees

a man groaned and shut the sight away with a ragged arm.

"Good shot!" yelled Dick, "plum through his heart by ——! H——! take away his gun, you fools! What's got ye?"

The two men holding Fairfax, the devil's readiest tools in the gang, had nearly released Fairfax to stare in a strange, frightened way at each other.

Quick as thought, Fairfax turned his pistol at his own head, but the man Sam struck his elbow such a blow that the weapon was knocked out of his hand into the dark.

"Ef I'd 'spicioned ye was aimin' ter shoot that shoot at youseff Mist' Rutherford," said Dick, "I wudn't 'a' sp'iled you' shootin'. Boys, let 'im go. I ain't gwine rue back on nare bargain. Good night, Mist' Fairfax Rutherford. You' the onlies' cyoward I ever knowed er you' name. You' paw done saved his money an' he got his son back, but I are a right smart mistaken if he wudn't ruther of lost ever' cent an' had his son killed up than git him back this a way. My respecks ter him, an' tell him Dick Barnabas ain't paid out his accaount *yet!*"

V.

ADÈLE RUTHERFORD had done what she could for the Fowlers. She had persuaded Mrs. Fowler to lie down in the other room with her baby. The children were asleep, except Bud, who sat by the bedside whereon his father lay in his poor best of clothes, with Adèle's own handkerchief bound about his head. Bud looked at him and thought. Strange thoughts for a child to know, gropings after a clew, misty plans for vengeance, images of the murderer's punishment over which his fiery young soul gloated with a thorough-going ruthlessness only possible to children—and women.

Adèle was opposite him. She had plenty of perplexing and sorrowful thoughts to harass her, but she was not altogether heavy-hearted. Often she reproached herself that she was not, the tears springing to her eyes at the sight of the motionless form on the bed, and the memory of his sacrifice.

"Oh, forgive me," she could have whispered in

that quiet ear, "I am not bad-hearted; but, you see, Cousin Fair has come."

In truth, Cousin Fair had occupied a much larger place in Adèle's fancy than she had in his. He only remembered a kind, strong girl, whose frocks were always being torn climbing where little girls ought not to climb. Uncle Fair called her, peevishly, a "perfect Miss Hoyden," and until he was old enough to read English comedies the boy puzzled over the name. Later, there were a few pictures of her luring him into break-neck sports; a mild one was sneaking out to the pasture to ride the colts that Unk' Ras' was breaking; and a pretty mess Miss Adèle would make of a clean frock on these jaunts! Once she was thrown into a thorn-bush. Her arm was scratched so that it swelled to a frightful degree; but she would not let him say anything about it. He had wept over the piteous sight, but she laughed merrily, and vowed that it didn't hurt her. Another time, one of Adèle's teeth must be pulled. The Colonel, who could not endure to hear a child cry, promised her a new horse if she would not utter a sound. She stood bravely by her bargain; but really it profited the soft-hearted dentist little, because Fair, beholding the awful

preparations, hid in the room, and howled at the top of his lungs. During their early childhood the cousins were devoted to each other. Often, after they were separated, did poor little Fair sob himself to sleep thinking of Della—longing for his father and the old plantation and her. But children's griefs are transient; he grew fond of his English nurse, who never scared him, "knowing her duty far too well, sir, to hever repeat 'orrid tales to children, wich she had knowed a most lovely child hit gave epileptic fits to, and ee never growed no more in consekense." And his uncle's friends had children who took Adèle's and his brothers' place.

When he came home to Arkansas, on his one visit there, he was very amiable and attentive to Adèle, being a polite little boy; but privately he thought that she could not be a very nice little girl, for she was always doing those things which he had learned that nice little girls never did; and she was *very* ignorant, not able to talk French at all and not knowing any of the Kings of England. Nevertheless she was great fun, and he wished ardently that he could ride and swim and row like the young romp. "She's awfully brave, Uncle Fair, don't you think?" he said to his

uncle. And the latter, glancing down the avenue at a joyful procession of four small darkies and a calf, with Adèle hanging on to its tail, had shrugged his shoulders, grumbling, "Brave! she hasn't enough sense to be afraid!"

Therefore Fair's approval of Adèle had its reserves; not so her admiration of him. She thought him simply the prettiest, sweetest, and cleanest little boy that she knew. He had seen all kinds of wonderful things, and he could play the fiddle almost as well as Unk' Rastus, yet he wasn't biggitty—not the least bit on earth.

Uncle Fairfax did Adèle injustice; she was clever enough. So he himself concluded when one day she rested two sharp elbows on the horse-block by the steps, tousled hair blown about her fair, freckled face, plenty of burrs in her skirts, and her hands none too clean, and said, slowly: "Unk' Fairfax, how come you'n Fair don't talk like we all?"

Mrs. Rutherford was in the gallery. "There, Adèle," she exclaimed, plaintively, "I am glad you are beginning to see what I tell you every day on earth. But you will talk nigger talk——"

"Unk' Fairfax an' Cousin Fair don't talk like you neether," interrupted the girl, unfilially.

"But you talk sweeter'n ary," she added, quickly, and with a most indecorous handspring she landed on the gallery floor to half smother her mother with kisses. "Say," she concluded, "I ain't gwine to talk nigger talk no mo'. You see!"

The day of Fairfax Rutherford's departure Mrs. Rutherford dreaded an

"How come you'n Fair don't talk like we all?"

explosion of grief, for she knew the child's intense nature; but Adèle had choked back her sobs, thrust all her childish treasures on Fairfax —all, that is, which were left, since for a week she had been parting with them one by one—

and she had stood on the shore, waving a clean new handkerchief until the boat rounded the bend. But then Slick Mose could not run faster than she sped from the landing. Away, away into the woods, where there were no houses, no people, where a desolate little girl could lie flat on the ground and sob and cry until the sun set. Only the hawks in the air and the quails hopping through the elbow-brush could hear her. They may have made out one sentence: "He *did* cry —a little!"

"*Il y a toujours l'un qui baise et l'autre qui tend la joue.*" In this early love-passage Adèle was not, as behooved a nice little girl, "the one who tenders the cheek." But presently the elasticity of her age and her health asserted itself. She turned all her energy into the task of transforming a madcap into a proper young lady. She flung herself into household details with the same enthusiasm which she had brought to the boys' sports. Neither did she quite give up the sports; that would have "mortified" the boys. This was the period when she sought for the Kings of England in Macaulay, and conscientiously read every book of the little library, from the "Essays of Montaigne" to "Youatt on the Horse."

There was a correspondence, growing more and more infrequent, but never quite failing; for Fairfax, boy though he was, had delicate intuitions and the kindest of hearts. He knew that his letters were very precious to Adèle. It was no end of a bore to write, but he did write, all the same, and he never told any one that it was a bore. Adèle, to-night, in that miserable room, with death and despair within and the murderer lurking without, forgot the sinking fortunes of her family, forgot her own sorrows and dangers, forgot that the South was ruined, and let her thoughts drift through these letters, every one of which wove a fresh charm about her hero. Once she slipped her hand into her pocket; there was a faint rustle as of paper. The truth is, there were a few letters in her pocket; she had brought them with her to read over for—what was the number of the time? And I dare say Fairfax found one perusal of the carefully written replies quite enough to satisfy him.

If Bud had not been present she would have brought out the letters now. Their meeting had been strange and sad and hurried; but she was more than satisfied. She expected nothing for herself, and her prince was all that she had dreamed.

A sentence from Bud aroused her. He said: "Miss Della, I ben studyin', an' I reckon I kin tell how Dick diskivered 'baout that ar money."

"How, Bud? Has he got a spy on the plantation?"

"He mought hev. He got one, shore, in Jacksonport. Look a yere, Miss Della, I seen a letter to Ole Man Parnish daown tuh Mis' Craowder's las' week. She sayd he got 'em riglar, an' they come from Jacksonport, an' she 'lowed he war waitin' on number two, kase of his wife died up las' month. But I don't, Miss Della. Them letters ben writ tew cl'ar an' slick fur are gyurl wad take up with *him*. I say them letters come from Dick Barnabas's spy. Ye knows Ole Man Parnish is powerful thick with Dick. 'Nuther thing, Miss Della, oner them letters come the verry same day the money come. Mis' Craowder done tole paw when she sent the word. Dick Barnabas ben a watchin' the hull bilin' er us. Reckon he knows Mist' Fairfax Rutherford done come, tew."

Adèle recoiled.

"Mabbe," Bud went on, with the merciless directness of childhood, "mabbe they didn't jest know who'd get the money, an' they killed off

paw fust, an' some more ben waitin' on Mist' Rutherford furder daown the road."

"God forbid!" cried Adèle.

"I don't want 'im fur tuh git hurted, neether. I want 'im tuh holp we uns kill Dick." The boy looked about him with a kind of shamefaced look, and lowered his voice: "Say, Miss Della, I are so sick 'er them graybacks I 'most wisht the Yanks wud come. We cud sell the cotton, onyhow. A passle of fellers sayd they ben Marmaduke's men, an' putt out a fire in we all's cotton patch; but paw he got the jug an' guv 'em a drink an' talked tuh 'em, an' they didn't putt out a much good fire, an' ayfter they ben gone, paw an' I packed up water from the creek an' throwed it on; but we all's tew bales at Bolus's gin, the graybacks burned them when they burned the gin. Now, Miss Della, they says we all is fightin' fur our homes an' property, but looks like when we git done fightin' we wunt have no property leff, kase our own folks is burned it all up."

"It was to prevent its falling into the Yankees' hands," said Adèle; "but I don't think it was right to impoverish us all on a chance of its hurting the enemy. I don't believe General Lee or Mr. Davis knows anything about it."

Adèle shared the Southern worship of Lee, and had a feminine loyalty in the teeth of facts.

"You got you' cotton off slick," said Bud; "*you* done it, tew." He gazed at her admiringly.

"There was no one else to do it. Unk' Ralph was away in the army, and ayfter all our trouble to make that crop I wasn't going to lose it. Who do you reckon showed us where to hide it?"

"Slick Mose?"

"Yes, Slick Mose, and the creature was pleased as pleased to see them all hunting. They were very civil, poor fellows. It was an ungracious duty; but they weren't to blame. They set the fields afire and burned up what was left afield; but it wasn't much, and a month ayfter the Federals came and I sold that Jew at Jacksonport the cotton—what is it?"

The boy was on his knees by the door, listening. Adèle joined him.

"It is the splash of a boat," she whispered; "somebody is coming down Running Water in a boat."

"He's got aout," said the boy.

They waited breathlessly until a scratching noise was heard at the door, accompanied by a kind of whine such as a dog makes.

"It's Mose!" cried Adèle, unbarring the door. "Here, Mose!"

The ragged and soaked shape darted, half-crouching, into the room to fling itself at Adèle's feet, gesticulating and moaning. He would run away for a little space and then return, all the while shrilly entreating.

Bud, as fearless a youngster as ever lived in the bottom, put a safe distance between himself and the fluttering, jabbering creature.

Adèle had grown very white. "Somebody is hurt," she murmured; "he wants me to go with him. I hate terribly to leave you all— Hark!"

Mose crouched on the ground as if he would hide behind Adèle; he trembled until his teeth chattered. The sound was the soft, prolonged swish of horses' feet wading through mud.

Adèle peered through the crack. Morning, wan and gray, was creeping over the low cotton-fields and the ragged black forest. She could see Dick Barnabas with four men, riding down into the ford. One of the men led the famous white horse, while Dick rode a white mule.

"That ar's Parson Collins's Ma'y Jane," cried Bud, "an'—oh, Lordy, Miss Della, thar's Betty Ward! D'ye reckon they all got that money?"

Slick Mose and Adele.

Adèle had risen, ashy pale; she made ready swiftly to go with Slick Mose, saying, while her shaking hands caught at her hat: "You're safe now, Bud; they won't come back after they have passed the house. I'll send Mose back home, and we will send out to you to-morrow."

Of the terrible fear in her heart she could not speak; but Mose was not more anxious to go than she. Slick Mose had the preacher's "bateau." He could row, as he could swim, better than any sane man around. He sent the rude boat forward with frenzied vigor. Once, lifting his oar, he pointed to the western sky and Adèle's heart contracted; she knew that no sunrise ever painted that lurid and flickering glare. At last the boat halted under the cypresses. No one but Adèle would have leaped unhesitatingly from log to log, to follow Mose into the brake. Were the path through quagmires she must have followed him, for now a hollow, crackling sound could be heard and showers of sparks streamed upward. Slick Mose was running, uttering his half-animal cry of pain. He chose the path so skilfully that not once did their feet sink below the surface. Fleet of foot as the idiot was, Adèle kept close to him. They emerged into the open.

Parson Collins's house was blazing before them, aflame now from pillar to roof-tree: but not a human creature was in sight. Mose ran to the sycamore to which the preacher had been bound. Blood-stains on the trampled ground, embers of a fire, sparks from which had probably set the house afire; on one side a litter of pawpaw bark, footprints everywhere of men and horses—one could still see these, but if Mose had left any dead witness of a crime, whose wounds might appeal to the indignation of men, the smoke and flame hid his fate.

There was something tragical about the spectacle; the absence of all the stir and bustle and outcry usual to such a calamity, the lonely house, with its gaping doors and windows, burning unheeded.

Slick Mose would have rushed into the flames had not Adèle, half by force, half by persuasion, withheld him. Sick with indescribable apprehension, she screamed, "Mr. Collins!" and "Cousin Fair!" until her voice failed her. All at once Mose wrenched himself from her grasp and began to dart round the house, at intervals stooping to examine the ground, uttering long wails like a dog when he trees a coon. In another moment

he bounded into the forest. She followed him; the creature's instinct was her sole dependence. It did not fail her either, for a little space in the wood they came upon an insensible, dishevelled figure lying half on a log, while an old negro woman alternately wailed and flung water over the pallid face, and two small children whimpered with fright on either side.

Adèle darted forward; she had recognized Parson Collins's old cook, Aunt Mollie Collins.

"O my heabenly Marster!" shrieked Aunt Mollie; "O Miss Della, de graybacks done make dis po' boy kill old Marse. Ole Marse make me run fo' de woods an I seen—I seen—dey burn 'im wid de fire—O Lawdy! Lawdy!" She burst into incoherent wailings. Then it was that Adèle bent over her cousin with that cry which Mose had tried to copy, "O Fair! O Fair!"

He opened his eyes; they were the blank, glassy eyes of insanity. Yet he knew her. "Adèle," whispered he, "listen; don't tell my father, it's a secret. I'm the only Rutherford that ever was a coward."

VI.

FAIRFAX RUTHERFORD awoke from his delirium in the chamber which had been his as a little boy. In his ravings he was continually begging them to find Slick Mose; Slick Mose had the money. "That's all I can do for them now," he would add. "Don't let them know about me."

It was Adèle who had divined that there was something in this iteration of Slick Mose's presence. She sought Mose the instant that the idiot returned to the plantation, which he did on the day following, starved, dirty, and, after his brute fashion, perceptibly unhappy. She followed him into the swamp and brought back the money.

But there was little enough rejoicing over its recovery. Fairfax's frenzied sentences had evoked phantoms of dishonor to flit like carrion-crows before his father's eyes.

What was the money worth, if those dark misgivings were true?

Adèle wondered drearily how many lives the

saving of the money had cost, and the taint of blood seemed in the air; while Mrs. Rutherford stood in such abject fear of the graybacks that she regarded the possession of so large a sum as simply inviting destruction.

The Colonel at first had been absorbed in his anxiety for Fairfax's life. He would not leave him day nor night; he was questioning everybody, watching every medicine. But lately, after one interview with Aunt Mollie, he had shrunk into a strange silence.

It was a sad house, truly enough; the very negroes were dejected. Aunt Hizzie cuffed and scolded her helpers in the kitchen, and bickered with Unk' Nels in the gallery whenever they met. The subject of dispute, usually, was no less than the efficacy of her "mixteriès." Nels would not carry them upstairs. Being Aunt Hizzie's husband, he had a wide experience of her physic; and his was the tongue of the scoffer. Moreover, though nature had muffled his utterance, she had left the cutting edge to his wit.

Aunt Hizzie was not so agile of mind as her husband, but she could keep up a fight longer, whence, on the whole, they were pretty evenly matched. Aunt Hizzie's strong argument was

her own robust health. "Look a' *you*"—this was a favorite taunt—"punyin' roun' de plumb w'ile. Look a' *me*, stout an' gayly! How came dat differ? You doesn't take my mixteries; I *does!*"

"I done take too many dem mixteries, *dat* whut make me puny," Unk' Nels would retort. Once he added: "Marse Fair nearly 'bout daid a'ready; reckon dey kill him off, sho."

"Is you seen 'im dis mawnin'?" Aunt Hizzie's real affection for the family called a truce to the squabble.

"Ya'as, I has, Hizzie," Unk' Nels replied, with solemnity; "fever yent cooled a mite. An' he plumb outer his haid. Skreeches turrible."

"Heabenly goodnis! Whut he say, Nels?"

"Same like he done say ever' day: '*I will not! I will not! I will not!*' dat a way. Hollers hit *loud!* Den he talk 'bout li'le black cat ain't got nare haid, talk right smart 'bout dat 'ar. W'en I fotch 'im de wine, he look a' me pow'ful cu'ris way, an' he ax me, Is de Cunnel his fader? an' w'en I says, 'Ya'as, sah,' he twurn his haid topper de pilly so he kin look a' de Cunnel, an' he say, 'Howdy, sah; does you know I is de onlies' Rutherford evah ben a cyoward?' Say, Hizzie, dat boy must 'a' did sumfin *turrible!*"

Aunt Hizzie snorted contempt almost beyond words: "I'se p'intedly mortified at ye, Nelson, gwine on dat a way 'bout you' young marse, you ornery, pusillanimous, triflin', black nigger!"

"Hizzie," interrupted Nels, calmly, "you minds me dem Chrismus pop-crackers like de 'postle describe—all soun' an' fury signifyin' nary! Cayn't *my* young marse ben a cyoward jes' much iz are torrer cullud pusson's young marse? *Somebuddy's* young marse got tuh be cyowards! Naw, Hizzie, gittin' mad doan' stop Marse Fair bein' a cyoward. I ain't cravin' tuh 'low he *done* ben sich iz dat, but looks like—looks like. He done some turrible meanness onyhow!"

Upstairs the wretched father heard every word. So did Adèle. The man's head fell. The girl lifted hers higher, as the color flamed in her cheek.

"Even my niggers know it," groaned Colonel Rutherford; "'I have lived a day too long.' Thank God, my brave boys are dead!"

"You have one brave boy alive," said Adèle, steadily.

The Colonel, having a broken leg, could not jump up and pace the floor; he only shrunk lower into his chair, as if she had struck him a blow.

"What *can* I think, Della?" he said, miserably. "You know what Aunt Mollie tells. He—he says he killed him. He keeps accusing himself of—" the Colonel choked over the word—"you heard *them*," he said, jerking his hand downward to imply the dusky gossips below.

"If he is against himself," said Adèle, firmly, "all the more reason his own kin should stick to him. I *know* he isn't—that!"

The Colonel turned on his niece a face in which an agonizing dread was struggling with a timid hope; he bit his dry lips before he could say: "Della, did—did you—you were with him a good deal in his young days—did you observe any lack of spirit—the others were so high-spirited that the contrast might make him seem—ah—tame, like—but I don't mean that, you understand; I mean—if he had been a Yankee boy" (oh, what a comparison for a Southerner!) "would you have 'lowed there ben anything wrong 'bout him?"

Adèle, whose high color had faded, did not meet the old soldier's imploring eyes.

"He was always right delicate, Unk' Ralph," she said, hurriedly, "and Mammy would tell him the awfullest stories; they made him scared, like—" Somehow she could not get any more

words out of her throat. The old man took his gray head into his hands, saying, huskily, "Mammy's fool talk didn't scare *you!*"

"Oh, but I was older."

"You were a *year* older. She didn't scare Jeff or Rafe. But what's the use?"

Adèle persisted: "We really don't know anything. He's just crazy, like. Talking about killing Parson Collins! Why wasn't he somewhere 'round if he was killed? Dead men can't walk off. And—and I had Aunt Mollie, soon as she and the children went back to their cabin, I had them and two of our men look all over the ruins. And there wasn't a trace of any human body in those ashes. He couldn't be burnt up to *nothing!*"

"Adèle," said the Colonel, "what did Aunt Mollie tell you? Oh, you needn't tell me. I've seen her. She seen them torturing him. She seen him—give in." He turned his head away.

"She was too far off to tell anything," cried Adèle; "*somebody* shot a pistol, so she lays it on Fair. How could *she* tell? If he did fire that pistol he did it when he was crazy. They drove him crazy."

"How do you make that out?" said the Colo-

nel. He did not look up or he would have seen how Fairfax had ceased his moaning of one phrase and was looking full at his father.

But Adèle saw.

In a second the wild, wide eyes closed ; Fairfax lay quietly, as if asleep. Adèle motioned at him. She rose directly and arranged the coverings more smoothly, listening meanwhile. He lay so quietly that she smiled sorrowfully at her thought that he could be returning to his senses and have understood. "Fast asleep," she whispered, passing the Colonel; "I must go see to his soup."

Nevertheless, her first impression was the true one—Fairfax had heard and understood.

She wheeled the Colonel's chair near the bed in order that he might hand Fairfax his drink if he asked for it. Then her soft footstep passed through the hall, down the stair.

The Colonel sat looking at his boy, whose delicate beauty was so like his mother's. The brow did not frown nor the lips quiver; no muscle of the sensitive mask betrayed the ever-swelling tide of memory and despair breaking like a sea over the sleeper's heart. Unavailing pity for his father, unavailing gratitude to Adèle, were stronger than remorse or shame. The bed gave a

little creak and rustle. The Colonel was leaning one elbow on the mattress and bending over him; he felt a trembling light touch on his hair and a tear rolled down his cheek—a tear not from his own eyes; his father had kissed him.

He lay motionless as before, but something warm stole into his chilled heart.

He waited until his father should resume his former position, and enough time should elapse to make it appear that he had not been disturbed, for he had the Anglo-Saxon shrinking from a display of emotion; then he moved and opened his eyes.

"Good morning, sir," said he.

"Good morning, Fair," said the Colonel; "feeling pearter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that's right, but you hadn't ought to talk."

That was all. The Colonel read "Montaigne," upside down. He always read "Montaigne" when he was in trouble; he would snatch up a volume at moments of special strain, open it anywhere, and read desperately for a few pages until he was sure of his composure.

But to-day he was past "Montaigne." His eyes

saw nothing. His hands trembled so that he could not hold the book steady, and, at last, he laid it down.

Fairfax pretended to fall asleep again. Nothing further was said between the two. When Adèle came into the room, and the Colonel had gone, he beckoned to her to come nearer, and said: "Slick Mose has the money."

"No, Cousin Fair, *we* have the money," she answered, as quietly as if this were not his first lucid speech. "When you were sick you told us, and we've got it."

"I am glad of that," said Fairfax. He turned to the wall and slept. When the doctor (who rode fifteen miles every other day to Montaigne) saw his patient, he pronounced the fever broken. In a few days it was quite gone. Yet Fairfax's condition did not seem to mend. One who had known the merry young fellow would hardly have recognized this changed, unsmiling man, who never complained, never was pleased, and spent most of his time furtively watching a melancholy elderly man seated by his window, book in hand, all day long and late into the night.

Colonel Rutherford seldom addressed his son; Fairfax never spoke to his father.

"Della, I'm worried to death about him," Mrs. Rutherford confessed; "he didn't take on like this when Jeff and Ralph were taken—he'd cry and talk about them, and he was all broken down with grieving; but now, Della, he won't talk to me. He cayn't seem to bear to speak a word to anybody—just sits and studies. He ain't reading that book; it's always open at the same place, and he never turns the leaves. And his eyes, Della, have you noticed how they look at you and don't seem to see you? It fairly gives me the all-overs. I wish to mercy Fair had never come; he never was good to him, like the dear boys, and now he has *killed* him." The speech,

"He has no one but me," she prayed; "help me to help him."

so unlike Mrs. Rutherford's gentle talk, ended in a burst of tears. Adèle did not answer a word. She soothed and caressed her mother, and made her a cup of their dwindling, precious tea, and put her to bed for a little time.

Then she went out into the woods, those same woods which had witnessed her bitter grief when Fair left her last. This time she did not weep. She leaned against a tree—for, indeed, she had need of support—while her hopeless eyes looked down the darkening river; and prayed. "He has no one but me," she prayed; "help me to help him!"

There are loves and loves; but of all loves, what has more of that quality which our aspirations name celestial than the love which may not look up to its object, yet will not look down, and under all the cruel mockery of failure sees the soul's divine struggle, and so forgives and loves and cherishes to the end? Such love contains more than protecting tenderness, like the affection of a mother for a deformed child; it not only pities, it comprehends and hopes.

Poor Adèle had been worshipping a magnificent cavalier; put to the test he seemed to have turned into a worthless craven and betrayer. But

her faith did not desert him; she had all a Southern girl's contempt for cowardice in a man, and her own temperament was singularly fearless; nevertheless she clung to Fairfax. She remembered his childish days, going back to Fair's imaginary terrors, painfully piecing together half-forgotten circumstances to get a clear argument of the case. Fair, in fact, had the timidity of a delicate and imaginative child, just the timidity to be outgrown with years, sense, and health. She remembered instance after instance when he had overcome it. There was the time she pulled that trifling, onery Tick Robbins out of the river —Fair had been rooted to the bank panic-smitten; but when, at the last, both Tick and she clinging to the branches of the willow, the branch had broken and they were drifting helplessly down the eddy, it was Fair who came trembling over the edge and crawled along the water-oak branch and pulled it down by his weight, so that they could hang on to his legs, and actually were rescued in that position.

How well she remembered the way the Colonel laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks; but he took Fair on his knee and kissed him, and gave him a "truly silver watch" for his own because

he had been a brave boy. And with a thrill she remembered, too, that Fair had dropped his eyes with a red face and in such a tremulous whisper replied, "But, paw, I wasn't brave, I was terribly scared up at first." The Colonel caught the boy to his breast and his own voice was a little husky as he said, "Boy, remember it ain't how you f-feel, it's what you d-do that counts."

It was long after this that Fair went on the annual wild-hog hunt. How white he looked as they sat on their horses before the gallery, at starting; but he came back jubilant, excited, eager to talk about the run and the sport. And there was the time with the rattlesnake. They came upon him in their walks and Fair took to his heels; but he came back and helped Adèle kill the snake. He said: "I thought you were running too, Adèle." When the snake was dead he shivered and sat down, pale and sick; she thought that he must be "chilling." But surely, surely he was not so easily startled the last time he visited the plantation; he no longer feared the dark, or ran from a tarantula, or crossed the fields to shun a bull, or looked askance at the cows; and he went to that hunt and rode with the rest if he did look pale at starting. Recapitulating

and studying every incident Adèle made her own theory, her own apology (using the word in the sense of the early Christian theologists) for Fairfax.

But she did not dare to hope that he, least of all, would accept it for himself. She knew that his father would not; while her mother's attitude was hopeless. She could not stay long by herself. Half an hour later she was back by Fairfax's side.

Aunt Hizzie stalked about the gallery below in deepest gloom. "Look a' dat servah!"* she proclaimed, dismally; "he yent et a mite. Nev' does eat. An' he yent *ill*, least bit on yearth. He does be fixin' tuh die, sho!"

"How come ye don't be totin' him up some you' sut-tea,† den? Ye 'lows dat cure ever'ting," said Unk' Nels, the cynic.

"Ef he ben had dat tea studdy," returned she, "he ben better'n he am now. Law me, I cayn't git up nare burryin' dinner dese times—no sody, no flour, no raisins nur lemons, an' dem 'lasses nearly 'bout gone tew! An' who'll preach de fun'al, now Parson Collins done ben killed up? Tell me dat, will ye, ye fool nigger?"

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* Server—tray; African for salver, probably.

† Soot-tea is a remedy in high esteem with the negroes. It is neither more nor less than chimney soot and water.

Like most of the pair's dialogues this was distinctly audible above.

"Poor Aunt Hizzie," said Fairfax; "she takes such pride in her 'burryin' dinners,' and mine will be but a poor affair. I am a disgrace all around, you see, Adèle."

He looked up to meet Adèle's wet eyes. She flashed one glance at the Colonel; his head rested peacefully on the back of the chair—"Montaigne" had slipped from his fingers. For a while he had forgotten his troubles.

"Oh, I cayn't bear it," she said, and hid her face.

The instinct of a gentleman made Fairfax rouse himself to comfort her.

"Oh, you know you mustn't," he said. "Adèle, dear Adèle, what is the matter?"

She was near enough for him to be trying to take her hands away. They fell, and he held them. A deep flush spread over her face. Their eyes met. Suddenly he dropped her hands with a kind of groan.

At once all the nurse in her awoke. "Does your shoulder hurt you?" she said, quickly.

"No," said he, "I had forgotten for a second what I am—and I remembered."

Adèle did not blush again; she looked at him steadily as she said, "Cousin Fair, you are *aiming* to die!"

"Why not?" said he.

"Cousin Fair," she said, slowly, "would it hurt you too much to tell me about it all? I don't know anything: I only guess at things."

He only hesitated a moment; then the whole miserable story came—at first, with a bitter sort of self-control; but before he ended he was sobbing as uncontrollably as, when a terrified child, he used to be comforted back to courage in her arms.

"Poor Fair, poor Fair," she murmured, stretching out her hand and patting his as his mother might; "I'm sure you didn't *know* you were doing it. They drove you crazy with their wicked torments. And you were wounded and almost dead, too. You would have withstood them if you hadn't been wounded."

But he was too honest to accept her comfort.

"No, they didn't," he cried; "I knew perfectly. But I don't understand it, Adèle: I was horribly scared, and the pain drove me frantic; but I was resolved to *let* them kill me rather than yield. I was saying, 'I will not, I will not,' to myself.

And even *while* I said it—I must have——" He groaned again.

"Did the men hold your hand?"

"One held my arm and another one my wrist and part of my hand, so I couldn't drop the pistol: but I know he didn't pull the trigger, for I overheard him telling the other fellow that he wished Dick would let the old man off. No, I must have done it, Adèle, and now you see why it is better for every one to have me die!"

"No, Cousin Fair, I don't," cried Adèle; "don't you think at all about us—about him?" moving her head in the Colonel's direction.

Fairfax's lips trembled into a dreary smile. "It is for his sake most that I want to die."

"Cousin Fair"—the passionate words were the more thrilling because spoken so low—"if you die now, how am I to convince him that you are *not* a coward? Yes, I say the word because I don't believe it. But he don't know you as I do—if you die now he never will; but if you live, if you are brave, as you always have been—you *have*, I say; you shan't interrupt me!—then, then, he will know he did you wrong, and be happy again. And there is Unk' Fair, too, who is so petted on you, and has had such disappointment already.

Cousin Fair, you have no right to leave them alone and broken down like they would be!"

He only nodded toward his father, muttering for her to hush, she would wake him. She clasped her hands more tightly, trying to smother in herself an impetuous something that was making her heart beat faster. "Look a' here, Cousin Fair, I will suppose that you have done the very worst that you fear; and I am going to say to you what I believe he would—he *will*—say to you, for I know he is alive."

Fairfax caught her arm. "If—if he were, Adèle—what makes you think so?"

Briefly Adèle repeated her reasons for hope.

"Mollie," she said, "really knows nothing, for she became so terrified when she thought Parson Collins was killed that she ran fast as she could into the swamp, and the next thing she knew the mule had thrown you off close to her."

Fairfax drew a long breath. "If—if he isn't dead there is some hope for me. But, Adèle, my firing that pistol isn't all. I had no right, whatever those devils did to me, to betray Collins into their hands. It seemed to me I had a right to give up the money. I knew Uncle Fair would pay it twice over for me; but, don't you see, it

wasn't a question of money, it was my giving up Collins. I knew he was a *man* and not a—fancy, Adèle, I haven't the courage to name the thing I am."

Adèle seemed to be thinking; it was a long minute to Fairfax before she answered, "Yes, Fair, you had no right to give in; but I don't believe you would if you hadn't been half out of your head with the pain and the chill. God won't hold you guilty for that. And even say you were guilty, guilty of the worst—well, what then? Does repentance mean despair or expiation? 'Bring forth fruits,' the apostle says. God will not despise a broken and a contrite heart: but if such a heart doesn't lead us to *do* something, it isn't contrite. Do you think that there is any good in unhappiness of itself? Unless our unhappiness for sin makes us more merciful to other people when they do wrong, and more careful not to sin again, and anxious to repair the wrong, I don't see any good in it—not the least bit on earth. I'm sure unhappy people, who are *just* unhappy, are mighty disagreeable; they don't join in anything, they don't like anything, and you feel as if you were heartless if you laugh at a joke when they're 'round, or enjoy anything you eat."

She made the little gesture with her hands which was almost the only thing about her to recall to Fairfax the eager and reckless little romp of his boyhood. But her soft voice never rose nor sharpened, though the tears of earnestness shone in her beautiful eyes.

"Fair, *please* try to understand what I mean, I've thought so *hard* what to say to you; it looks like I couldn't say it right, in the way to convince you, but I have to try. You think there isn't any more happiness left in life for you; I think surely there is. But if there isn't, there's *duty*. Not *only* to Unk' Ralph, Cousin Fair; I'm only a girl and I don't understand much about politics, but I know that every one, man or woman, owes something to his country. Unk' Fairfax reckoned we all were wrong; he said he couldn't fight for the South and he wouldn't fight against her, so he stayed in Europe; and I expect you thought like him."

"Yes," said Fairfax.

"I don't; but that hasn't anything to do with it. Now I know as well as you, Cousin Fair, that we are beaten in Arkansas; but now, if we are beaten, we have got to live. There is the land left and the poor people, and it's our own coun-

try, Cousin Fair; you haven't any right to desert it. And because it is ruined and miserable, that's the more reason you should try to help. If you want to make amends to Mr. Collins, to Unk' Ralph—they love this poor country—stay here and help them try to save it. Oh, you know, you know how Unk' Ralph has struggled to improve this place, to get better roads and better houses and some way civilize the people; and you know how Mr. Collins helped him. If you want to make amends—please, Cousin Fair, excuse the plain way I talk—then help to rid the country of the graybacks, and get in provisions, and keep peace now, and the rest will come in time. That —that will be expiation; but to lie here and die of shame—if you do, do you know what I say? I say, Cousin Fair, you weren't a coward, but you *are!*"

"I say, that *is* a blast, Adèle," said Fairfax, but the ghost of a smile crept to his lips. He looked up at her wistfully. And perhaps for a moment there flashed over him a perception of the difference in his mental attitude from what it had been so short a time ago. He had felt for his people the half-compassionate toleration of the cosmopolite for the provincial. It may be that the hawk

has a kindred feeling for the quail, a useful, virtuous enough bird, but with no breadth of experience, no distinction. He had found the details of Adèle's life, as depicted in her letters, petty and uncouth to a degree; he had winced over his father's lapses in etiquette and grammar, over his contented rusticity, over Mrs. Rutherford's preposterous landscapes, over the whole feudal medley of magnificence and shabbiness about the place; now he, the admired young man of the world, who had started to the rescue of his father's wrecked fortunes with such a foolhardy confidence, had failed ignominiously. He lacked even those primitive, basic virtues on which manhood depends, which knit society together—courage and fidelity. Why, the very poor whites, the renters on his father's plantation, the ragged farmers in the hills who knew nothing of the refinement of the senses, were *men* at least, brave and loyal, and had the right to despise him. He who should have been the honor of his father's house was its everlasting reproach.

It was the boy's nature to shrink from suffering; he did not know how to be unhappy; and his soul clung to Adèle's strong tenderness with its old childish *abandon.* What would have jarred

upon him once he did not even see; he went back to the love of his childhood, but with a humility which he never had known before. Her words opened a window of hope to his darkness; and in his prostration of remorse the denial, the self-mortification, the hardship and dangers of the expiation that she proffered him, were its poignant attraction. He experienced something of the dependence on pain of the mediæval saint who pressed the spiked crucifix into his flesh. As not infrequently happens, the part of Adèle's little sermon which she herself felt most fervently may be said to have passed clean over Fairfax's head, and he was affected by an incidental and extraneous quality of thought.

But affected he was; dragged out of his apathy, to stand morally on his feet—a man, if a ruined and desperate one.

After a long pause he spoke:

"I don't suppose you have such things as clothes left in the store."

"We have mostly *shelves* in the store," said Adèle, hiding a thrill of hope under a light speech; "but I have been altering some of Unk' Ralph's clothes, and there's a pair of his boots, but"—dubiously—"they are pretty old."

Another long pause; the inventory of clothes did not seem to rouse Fair.

She waited; a little wind fluttered the leaves of the "Essays," open on the floor. A line in italics, marked below in ink, stared out at her, hatefully plain: "*I have, therefore, lived a day too long!*" The Colonel's profile, laid back on the chair, had lost its fresh coloring, the eyes were sunken, there were new furrows cut in the forehead.

Fair's eyes followed hers from the book to the sleeping face.

"You see," said he, quietly, "he thinks so too. I have lived a day too long. But I am going to try again, Adèle." Inwardly he added, "I can't whine to her, but maybe I shall be lucky enough to get killed by the graybacks, and then the poor old governor will forgive me and be comforted."

Adèle had only said, "Thank you, Cousin Fair," in a tremulous voice. He stole another look at her; he felt so inexpressibly weak and wretched, worn out by his own passion, and she —she looked so gentle, yet, with the light in her eye, and the flush that was come to her cheek, and the erect, supple young figure, how strong!

"Adèle," he whispered, flushing to his hair,

"do you—do you despise me too much to kiss me once?"

She bent her lovely neck and kissed his cheek, softly and very tenderly, as his sister might.

Then she rose and slipped out of the room. He imagined when he saw her again that there were traces of tears on her cheeks; but he had not the courage to ask her anything.

VII.

IT is difficult for any one not a Southerner to picture adequately the isolation of an Arkansas plantation during the last year of the war. Before the war Montaigne was a post-office, and three times a week the mail came. There were half a dozen plantations or wee settlements within riding distance. Four times a week, going or coming, the steamboat dropped its gangplank at the landing below the mill, to the accompaniment of a prodigious screaming of whistles, ringing of bells, hurly-burly of men, and an opulence of profanity.

Of a Saturday one might often see as many as twenty horses tied to the hitching-bar under the great willow-oak, before the store. The "big house" could entertain a dozen guests without pinching.

Strangers, whatever their degree, met a welcome of mediæval freedom. Horses, slaves, provisions abounded. There was a saying that any honest man might have a beeve or a pig from

Colonel Rutherford, for the asking. Life on a plantation before the war, indeed, was a mediæval idyl.

We all know the conclusion of the idyl. Enter grim-visaged War with his visor down. There is a woful end to all the piping and dancing. The gay cavaliers ride away to battle-fields where all shall be lost save honor. The laughing dames fight a harder battle at home, in their black gowns, starving and contriving and toiling for their doomed cause and their unreturning knights.

Inevitably the war stopped all the pleasant, kindly interchange of neighborhood courtesies and visits. The cumbersome but, withal, pliable mechanism of society was crushed to atoms. The store-shelves emptied themselves, and thereafter stood yawning in a way to make a Northern shopkeeper weep. Rarely did a rider venture across "the creek." When visitors did come, they rode armed to the teeth; the very women had revolvers stowed somewhere about their rusty cotton riding-skirts. Bands of pillagers wasted the country, and any man might be a hidden ally of the graybacks; hence distrust, the base-born brother of fear, harassed all honest men worse than fear itself.

As the brief, chill November sunshine grew briefer and chillier, and the cold mud of the swamps deepened with frost and rain, weeks would pass, perhaps, without a strange face being seen on the plantation. Walled in by its vast and sombre forests, Montaigne lay on the little river, as lonely as a Russian steppe. Such isolation could not but be an obstacle to discovering any trace of Parson Collins. There were no neighbors to bring in a clew. Even supposing any one had found a clew, had seen the dead man alive and well, he was not likely to risk his horse, or, possibly, his life, carrying his news to Montaigne. The Colonel's parties scoured the country round the Parson's farm in vain. For any sign left behind, he might have sunk through the earth.

Meanwhile the loneliness and monotony of the life affected Fair in the worst way. His thoughts sagged forever on one theme, like a gate on a broken hinge. The canker-fret of disgrace was eating his heart. He could not believe, in spite of Adèle's assurances, that his father's precaution in sending Mollie Collins away had been successful, and that all the plantation did not consider him a craven murderer.

"As I am," thought Fair. "Even if Adèle is

right and I didn't pull the trigger, I got the poor old man into the hole."

The very clothes which he was obliged to wear were like a convict's suit to him.

He had a young Englishman's respect for himself physically; and here he was, washing with a nasty mess called soft-soap, and skulking about the plantation with his toes out of his boots, patches on his knees, and a battered old hat so large that he must needs tie it under his chin. He laughed at the grotesque figure he cut; but no lover chooses to cut a grotesque figure before his mistress, and his laugh hurt. As soon as he was able to crawl he occupied himself with incessant projects of forays

against the guerillas, in which his best hope was to get killed—of course, after performing prodigies of valor.

No sooner was he able to crawl down-stairs than he proposed to the Colonel that he go to Memphis and buy supplies for the store. He could ride to Mrs. Crowder's, and from there to the Federal lines was but a short distance. The Colonel had listened as usual, with his eyes everywhere except on Fair. "I don't guess you better," he said; "you ain't stout enough." The words were kind, but Fair felt choked. "He won't trust me," he said to Adèle; "well, why should he? I was a fool to ask." It was not often that he spoke so freely, even to Adèle. Yet he depended on her, he felt her sympathy, and, what was a thousand times more bracing, her belief in him, every hour of the day.

It showed the real nobility of Fair's nature that, unable at first to gratify his longing for action, wherein, he conceived, lay his only chance of redemption, he should try in every humble way to be useful. There was nothing glorious in tuning the piano, or mending chairs (in a very bungling fashion, to the bargain), or painting the ceiling of Mrs. Rutherford's sitting-room, or riding about

the plantation to report the condition of fences; yet it took more resolution to push away his black moods and address himself to such trivial tasks than has carried many a man into battle.

An unexpected result of these efforts was the conquest of Mrs. Rutherford. She could not think hard long of such an amiable and ingenious young man, who never found fault with his meals. The piano softened her; and his gratitude over the two shirts which she made for him convinced her entirely that he never *could* have shot Parson Collins. "And how Ralph Rutherford can go on the way he does to that poor boy," she said to Adèle, once a day at least, "I can't make out. I declare it's wicked. It is so."

The relations between father and son had grown no more familiar. When the Colonel was obliged to address Fair, he used a sort of studied gentleness; but he never spoke to his son of his own accord. Three times a day they met at the table, and talked to Mrs. Rutherford and Adèle. On Fairfax's part the restraint came from an intolerable sense of self-abasement. "*Écraser l'infâme*," he would think, bitterly. His father's good opinion had grown into a prize, now that he judged it lost forever. He could see, now, the heroic quali-

ties of the shabby old planter, his strong will, his clear head, his stainless honor, his noble patience.

On the Colonel's part the feeling was more complex. Uncouth, and even vulgar, as some aspects of his life may appear to a Northerner, he had all the patrician instincts. "Born and raised a gentleman," is the Southern title of nobility; and the Rutherfords had been gentlemen for centuries. Fair's flinching in the face of danger and his betrayal of Collins were unpardonable sins, according to his father's code. No Rutherford ever had been a coward; no Rutherford ever could have been a traitor. Had Fair been killed by the graybacks, bravely resisting to the last, the blow would have broken his father's heart, but the stanch old man would have exulted in his desolation because his son had been strong and quit him like a man. Fair, his best-beloved child, would have been dead, but not lost. Now, not being dead, he was lost. Ralph Rutherford could never hold up his head again. He was like a man struck a mortal blow, who staggers a few paces, not knowing what he does. To Mrs. Rutherford it seemed that Fair was dead to his father; but Adèle, whose eyes were keener, said, "Then, mamma, why does he always watch Fair and

follow him wherever he goes?" and the elder woman had no answer.

She soon perceived that the Colonel shunned every one. He said—with his eyes on his boots —that he should disturb her rest, he had such uneasy nights; and he went off to a bare room of his own. Often and often did his wife lie awake and listen, weeping, to his heavy, uncertain tread.

"And I know he'll make his leg bad again, walking on it so reckless!" she would reflect, wretchedly; "but it's no use on earth me saying a word!"

But it was hard for her, who had helped him to bear his other sorrows, to be shut out of this cruellest of all.

Were it any consolation (and women being what they are, very possibly it was), she might assure herself that no one else stood any nearer to him. He never so much as looked a negro in the face, if he could help it; the routine of the plantation seemed hateful to him; while he, the sweetest-tempered of men, was turned moody and irritable, fretted at trifles, and flew into a passion over the slightest contradiction. Frequently, however (and this was the more distressing to his wife), he would check his hasty speech with a painful sort

of humility. It was as if he should say: "I am a ruined, disgraced old man; what right have I to be angry at anybody?"

The poor lady actually welcomed his plans for hunting down Dick Barnabas, since in them, at least, he showed a feverish interest.

Bud Fowler really started the first expedition. After the Colonel refused Fair permission to ride to Crowder's, Bud, who had brought his family to the plantation, quietly rode over there without mentioning his intentions.

It was as he suspected; Mrs. Crowder had written the note. Not half an hour after Jim Fowler left the tavern Betty Ward had galloped back, and they saw smears of blood on her bridle.

"The minnit I seen that," said worthy Mrs. Crowder, "I putt it up suthin' had happened to Jim. So Tobe and me jes' taken the hoss back, an' he was layin' on the grass. Mymy! mymy! when I seen him I sot right daown an' bellered, I felt so bad. I hadn't no more wits in me iz a fittified sheep. But says Tobe, 'Maw, whar's the money?' An' says I to myself, 'Willy Crowder, if Jim kep' that ar money, ye got t' git it back!' So we done accordin'. We uns histed you' paw on the hoss, best we cud make out, and Tobe writ

the note; an' we p'inted her haid an' sent her ayfter Mist' Rutherford. Looked like the critter knowed, she went off so slick."

Mrs. Crowder felt sure that Dick had a spy in Jacksonport, and that he knew of the money's being sent. He knew about young Rutherford's coming, also; but she could not decide whether he supposed that Jim was to carry the money.

Bud's own theory was to the effect that Dick was *not* sure, and that therefore he had stationed assassins along the road to kill both.

"That a way he 'lowed t' make the wiggle, no matter *how* the cat jumped," said Bud; "now, question is, *Who* writes them letters? But more of a question are, *Whut's* in 'em? Mis' Crowder, we got t' fine aout. An' it's easy. Jes' peek in the letters."

Thanks to the unscrupulous child who put the notion into her head, Mrs. Crowder, from that day forth, opened every letter that came to her office, lest by any chance she should miss one for Dick's confederate. I believe she had the grace to keep her tampering with the mails to herself; but it does not appear that she ever felt any compunction. Like most women, she was a bit of a Jesuit, and held that the end must look

out for the means. I even fear that she was interested in the other letters.

Owing to her information, Colonel Rutherford presently was able to foil an attack of the gray-backs on a "cross-roads" store. A little force of old soldiers was collected, authority was easily obtained from the Federal general in command of the district, and finally they were mounted, armed, and mustered before the house. The Colonel limped out and climbed into the saddle. Fair came out of the house to help him. "I can make out," said the Colonel, not lifting his eyes from the horse's mane. But Fair did not move away. He was white like a piece of chalk, Unk' Nels told Hizzie.

"May I go with you, sir?" said he.

The Colonel would not look at him.

"You are too sick," he answered, in a gruff way.

"I am quite well again, sir."

"You ain't got nothing to ride."

"There's Laughing Johnny."

Laughing Johnny was a mule.

"Did you know Betty Ward came back last night?—Lord knows from where; you better take *her*."

"Thank you, sir."

No more words were exchanged, nor did the Colonel pay his son further attention, but when the troop clattered down the avenue, Fairfax, on Betty Ward, rode in the front rank.

They overtook the guerillas at the cross-roads store, which they were looting. There was a short, sharp combat before the outlaws broke and ran. Colonel Rutherford's men were the better mounted, and Fairfax's horse outstripped the others. During the pursuit, his spirits almost rose to their old boyish level. With actual gayety he plunged in among the bullets. When the leader of the graybacks (it was not Dick) swung around in his saddle to fire at him, Fairfax saw him roll off, under his return fire, with a throb of stern exultation. But afterward, it was different. Five haggard, muddy, scared-looking men, some of them wounded, bare-headed, and their hands tied behind their backs, forced into a line to look into the muzzles of levelled guns and to hear the grizzled lieutenant's command: "Dress up now and stand steady, unless you all would like better to swing!"—there was no sight to brace a man's anger or fire his courage!

Fairfax shut his eyes because he was ashamed to turn his head.

"Dress up now and stand steady, unless you all would like better to swing!"

"One moment, lieutenant," said Colonel Rutherford. "Mr. Rutherford!" Fairfax started like a girl, and then cursed himself for his nervousness, as he saluted.

"Mr. Rutherford, you will take three men and ride as fast as possible to Montaigne with the news. Tell them to get a good supper ready for us immediately."

Fairfax saluted again, took his men, and galloped away. The group in the woods was left behind, the victors with their prospect of a good supper, the doomed vanquished men casting their last glances at the sun.

In a moment a volley of musketry crashed behind them. All they could see (for every man turned in his saddle) was a little ragged cloud of smoke staining the sky.

"I seen Jim Fowler's coat on one ur 'em," one man said.

"Dessay," said the other; "wall, they got thar desarvin's. Have a pull, sir?" producing a whiskey-bottle and addressing Fairfax. "You does look p'int-blank gashly. 'Tain't no joke seein' them tricks, fust time; but, laws! ye'll git over hit. They're a bloody gang er thieves."

"Thanks, no," said Fairfax.

"You' paw's health, then"—the flask went to the speaker's mouth, as he winked pleasantly over Fairfax's back at his comrade.

Fair rode on, raging at himself. His father would despise him for flinching; even these fellows had noticed it. "And I needn't call it humanity," he thought, angrily. "I knew they richly deserved hanging. If somebody had told me they were to be hung, supposing that I were somewhere out of sight and hearing, I dare say I shouldn't have cared a pin. It was simply my cursed cowardice; I hadn't the nerve to look at them being killed. No doubt *he* was afraid I should go to pieces entirely and make a fool of myself, so he sent me away. Might as well never have come, for any use I have been."

Thus the poor lad mentally scourged himself all the way home.

But that night, for the first time, Colonel Rutherford looked at him when he asked a question; and the next morning at breakfast he said:

"Say, Fairfax, when are you 'lowing to get off on that foraging party of yours—stock for the store, you know?"

Fairfax brightened up. "I am at your service any time, sir," said he.

VIII.

FAIRFAX did go. More than that, he plucked up courage to propose to his father a plan for entrapping the graybacks "in a flock," as the Colonel phrased it, "instead of hunting them down in coveys."

His idea was to use Dick's spy for Dick's own undoing, to buy his provisions, load a boat, secure a guard of Federal soldiers, and let all his plans leak out in time for Dick to use them. A boat loaded with provisions (including quinine, tobacco, and whiskey), with arms, ammunition, saddles, clothes, and the like, as well as a store of greenbacks in small bills, was a treasure-ship to tempt any graybacks. The guard of soldiers would insure bringing out the full strength of Dick's band. Let them once attack the boat, Colonel Rutherford could raise enough of a force to descend on the fight and capture most of the graybacks. Of course, his men were to be gathered with great secrecy, in order that Dick might suppose that his only foe was on the boat. The

Colonel listened in silence to Fair's explanations, and so grimly that Fair gave his hopes up for lost; but when he made an end, confused and reddening, his father said: "Maybe we could make out; I'll cipher it out a little to myself and tell you my notion later." He got up (rather stiffly, as he always moved nowadays), took the cane that Fair handed him, and, presently, was walking among the peach-trees in the orchard. When he returned he told Fair, curtly enough, that he had decided to "risk it."

The arrangements were quickly made. Fair was to ride to the Federal lines, and thence get as quickly as possible to Memphis. Half a dozen men would ride with him as far as Mrs. Crowder's, where he was to meet a company of Federal soldiers marching south. His time of departure was arranged to correspond with their arrival.

The morning before he started Aunt Hizzie ran into the library. For Aunt Hizzie to run was an unprecedented event. She said herself that "she hadn't de figger fo' runnin', bress de Lawd! an' she didn't 'low t' traipse all over creation. Ef folkses didn't want tuh come when dey ben called, dey jes' cud stay 'way!" Consequently her habit was to stand still, wherever she might

happen to be, and cry aloud for whomsoever she desired to see, equably regardless of the whereabout of the person addressed. Mrs. Rutherford declared that Aunt Hizzie used to call on the Colonel when he was away to the wars. Yet now, behold Aunt Hizzie running, crying, as she runs: "Miss Della! Miss Della! It's Slick Mose! He done come. He know suthin' 'baout Passon Collins, fo' sho'!"

Adèle hurried out of the room. She had sent Slick Mose on one of his quests for the minister, three weeks ago; and he had not returned. Fair and Colonel Rutherford were left together. The Colonel jumped up and restlessly paced the floor; but Fair sat like a statue at the window. His only change of attitude was to drop the sword which he was cleaning, lay both his elbows on the window-sill, and look out at the leafless branches swaying in the wind.

"Della keeps Mose on the path, don't she?" said the Colonel, yet he said it so much more like a man talking to himself than addressing another that Fair made no reply. "She sets a heap by his notions in things. Well, there's no telling 'bout these half-witted creatures. And more people are half-witted than is suspected. I

reckon we don't any of us rightly know when we have committed a great folly till the consequences come projicking round to kick us. It is like Montaigne says, somewhere: 'The justest dividend nature has given us of her favors is that of sense; for there is no one that ain't satisfied with his share.' No doubt Slick Mose thinks he's a mighty scheemy feller. I've made as bad breaks as Mose, I reckon. Maybe I made one 'bout you, Fairfax——"

But Fairfax was never to hear the end of that sentence; Adèle's swift footsteps sounded in the hall, she came in with an eager, agitated manner, and flung her arms about the Colonel's neck.

"I told you he was alive, and he *is* alive!" she cried.

"Brother Collins?" said the Colonel. "My Lord!" He sat down, looking very pale.

"You know you can't make *very* much out of Mose," said Adèle, "but he declares and repeats that he has seen him, been with him. It must have been going from him that he got shot. Oh, Uncle Ralph, those cowards shot the poor fellow —in the leg! It must have been two weeks ago; the wound is almost healed. That's why he

stayed so long. He went to his mother—the poor crazy fellow knew enough to do that."

"We have only Slick Mose's word for it," said Fair.

Adèle was quite composed again. "*I'd* be satisfied with that," said she, "but I don't reckon you all will. There is one thing else; some darky told Aunt Hizzie that there was a sick man at Aunt Tennie Marlow's cabin. Mose talked about Aunt Tennie, too; he is so disconnected it is hard to understand; but I am sure he said she was nursing Mr. Collins."

"I'll ride over to-morrow and see," the Colonel said.

Fairfax sprang to his feet like one sitting on hot coals; he took a step toward his father, whose face changed to meet the white eagerness in the son's; then, without speaking a word, he turned on his heel and stood staring out of the window again, too absorbed in his own tumult of soul to be conscious how the elder man's burning eyes followed every motion. Neither did he look up when he spoke.

"Could you send me a letter to Memphis, sir, telling what you have found out?"

The Colonel straightened himself, drawing a

deep breath. "I'll let you know," said he. He glanced from Fairfax's slim figure, the curly brown head and the oval of one smooth cheek, which was all that he could see, up to Fairfax's mother's face smiling on the wall.

Fairfax held his head, Adèle thought, like that painted lady. Did some arrow out of the past, when the son who had disgraced him was only his own dear little baby, fly straight to the proud, tender old heart? Adèle saw him wince and a quiver run across his mouth before he limped stiffly, and with his head on his breast, out of the room to the garden, and so back to the orchard.

"Oh, Fair," said Adèle, "I am so sorry. Shan't I beg Uncle Ralph to let you stay *one* day longer?'

"Not one hour, Adèle," Fair answered, forcing a smile. "A pretty soldier you think me."

"You could ride at night," persisted Adèle, "and catch the Yankees if they had left——"

"And if I didn't catch them? No, the governor is right. He wouldn't want me to run any risk of failing, and I shan't. Should *you* want me to, Adèle?"

"No, Cousin Fair," said she.

"Thank you, dear," said Fair, and went away;

but his heart was sitting more lightly in his breast than it had for many a day, because of the look in her soft eyes. Before he was half-way to the quarters he had returned in triumph from his expedition, received a glorious wound somewhere (he was not particular at all where), beheld Parson Collins, been assured by him of forgiveness, built the worthy man a church, ridden about in a decent suit of clothes, and was offering himself to Adèle with amazing eloquence.

"What an ass I am, to be sure!" cried he to himself; "bad as the fellow father tells about, who offered a nigger a dime to kick him because he was such a fool; he was sure it must be catching, and he didn't want to give it to any white man!"

But Fair's exhilaration did not last. While he was jeering at himself for dallying with such day-dreams, dismissing them, yet summoning them again (all the time going at a great pace through the quarters), he was accosted by Bud Fowler.

"Say, M'ist' Rutherford!"

"Well?" Fairfax stopped to listen. Bud, who was wearing a pair of Confederate gray trousers, formerly his father's, and adapted to his shorter legs by the simple device of cutting them off

at the bottom, stretched his finger-tips down to the pockets, hitched the pockets up into his clutch (they were about level with his knees), and, finally, produced a letter from the depths. It was in an old, yellow envelope, written on a page torn from a ledger, and purported to be from one Tennie Marlow to Mrs. Crowder, telling the latter that she (Tennie) could not come to help her cook because she was "waitin' on Mr. Barnabas' sprained leader * in his lef' lag."

Aunt Tennie Marlow was well enough known to Fair. She was an old and very black negress who enjoyed a great name as a bone-setter, knew "a heap 'baout beastis," ushered all the babies of the neighborhood into the world, and on the strength of these gifts and of living alone was suspected to be a "conjure woman." She lived on the edge of the plantation.

"Hit war Ma'y Jane done it," pursued Bud, with a grin; "she rid him up agin a fence an' mashed his laig. He sw'ars he'll conquer her yet. I does hope he'll try it; Ma'y Jane's powerful scheemy, powerful. His black hoss' shoulder riz. They all split it, an' put in a silver dime Dick paid

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* Leader is a muscle or tendon.

a greenback dollar for tuh Aunt Tennie. By the light er the moon, tew, but didn't do no good; an' Dick, he aims tuh ride Ma'y Jane."

"How ever did you find out all this, Bud?"

"Wall, sir, ole Tennie, she did come to Mistress Crowder, an' so I fotched her a 'possum. I aimed t' fine out whar Dick ben, but she wouldn't let on she knowed. I 'lowed to go an' shoot a shoot at him, if thar warn't *tew* big a crowd 'raoun'."

The boy was as unconcerned as possible; he was not bragging, he was merely stating a fact.

"You wouldn't shoot a wounded man, would you?" said Fairfax.

"I'd kill a snake however ways I f'und him," said Bud; "wudn't *you?*"

"No," said Fairfax, grimly, "I would drag him out and hang him!"

With that he walked away, bitterly disappointed, sure that Dick must be the sick man, not Parson Collins. As he passed, Colonel Rutherford came down one of the little lanes or streets between the quarters, at right angles to that down which Fair took his way. He didn't see his father.

"Fair," said the Colonel, huskily.

Fair slunk by, not hearing.

The Colonel made a motion as if to follow, but instantly resuming his former demeanor he walked rapidly away in another direction. He muttered to himself as he went: "Hates terribly to go; but he had ought to. Yes, sir. And the only chance for the lad to get righted is to do his duty."

IX.

"SAY, Miss Della, they all done it; they swallered the bait hull." It was Bud Fowler who spoke, his solemn, peaked little face alight with something shrewd and fierce at once. He had just returned from Mrs. Crowder's, and was talking to Adèle in the gallery. "Dick's ole man ben up thar an' got the letter," said he. "I seen the letter. Mymy! mymy! but they all are scheemy. The ole 'possum, he writ iz Mist' Rutherford ben thar an' got a boat plumb full er supplies fur the store, an' he '*oped* graybacks wudn't meet up with him when he landed daown by the big eddy fur t' let Lum Marzin git the goods fur *his* store; but *did* look resky like t' *him*—an' all sich truck like that. We cudn't prove nary 'gin 'im by that letter, nur nare letter he writ, neether. But I 'low he won't be sutler for the Yanks *long*."

"Do you reckon Barnabas will fight, Bud?" said Adèle.

"Shore. Them graybacks is a ra'rin' on we uns

Dick Barnabas and some of his Graybacks

now; wud of attacktid Montaigne a spell back, hadn't Dick ben laid by with his laig. Yaas, ma'am, they'll fight. An' it's they uns or we uns cleaned off the earth—one!"

He emphasized what he felt was a manly sentiment, in his own notion of a manly manner, by spitting, with a determined air, on one side. Thus he happened to look down the avenue. "Hi!" he exclaimed, "look a' thar, Miss Della!"

Down the broad roadway, the silhouettes of two horsemen and a crowd on foot stretched before the real figures. "Two graybacks, shore's you born," Bud cried, excitedly; "ain't got thar hands tied nur nary—shucks! they're comin' to guv 'emseffs up," he concluded, in a disappointed tone. "I lay thar won't be nare hangin', dad burn 'em! Look a' them a grinnin', an' big Jim, tew."

Big Jim, a gigantic negro, armed with an axe, showed his teeth from ear to ear. So did all the black faces behind him, and Mr. Rawlins, the clerk at the store, smiled in an excited way, like one well pleased. He took off his hat to Adèle:

"Cunnel here, Miss Della?"

Adèle said that he was in the library. It seemed to her a strange and alarming circumstance that the three white men should enter the library unac-

companied, especially considering that the two strangers carried their guns.

"Reckon I know them two men," said Bud; "they don't be sich turrible wicked men. They call 'em Lige Rosser and Sam Martin. Expect they sorter sickened er Dick Barnabas's ways." Adèle was straining her ears for some sound from the library. It came at last—a loud exclamation interrupting what seemed a low monotony of narration, then a staccato exchange of question and answer, finally the buzz of several voices.

"You see, Miss Della," whispered Bud, "that's hit." His face sharpened with his own brooding thoughts. He stood digging his heel into the gravel, his ridiculous trousers blowing about him, as absurd and inadequate a figure of retribution as the fancy could conceive; yet Dick Barnabas's Nemesis waited in his person. "Hit's a comin'," he muttered; "Dick Barnabas are a goin' ter git his desarvin's, shore; 'tain't on'y the ole Cunnel ayfter 'im, an' 'is own men a fallin' frum 'im. Ghostis be ayfter *him*. That's what."

"Why do you think that, Bud?" said Adèle, listlessly; she was still listening, and vainly trying to distinguish words out of the low murmur into which the voices had dwindled.

"'Cause why?" said Bud. "'Cause thar's ben smoke seen an' buzzards sailin' an' sailin' over yon', ye know"—Bud tilted his head backward—"Mist' Leruge's place. Unk' Nels seen it, an' big Jim, and Aunt Hizzie she 'lows Mist' Leruge goin' t' go that a way till Dick Barnabas gits killed up! An' thar's more tew it, Miss Della. Slick Mose ben a knockin' raoun' dretful oneasy like, nickerin' like a hoss an' runnin'—ye know the way he does. An' he wudn't res' till he tolled me off 'longer him. But when I seen whar he ben aimin' tuh cyar me—that er same place, ye know—I got skeered up, kase I didn't never have no dealin's with ghostis, an' I didn't crave t' seek 'em. So I lit out fer home. But I ben studyin' 'baout it. Fust, looked like tew me that ar ghostis ben jes' like the painters what wags thar tails fur tew toll on the sheep; but then I considered iz how Mist' Leruge didn't had nare grudge agin *me*, not the least bit on earth, so how come he'd seek t' do *me* mean? Same way 'baout Mose; but him and me both got a grudge agin the graybacks, an' I putt it up that ar ghostis are jes' sendin' Mose fur t' fotch me; an' he are goin' show me *some* way t' hurt Dick Barnabas. An' next time Mose axes me go thar, I are goin'. Yaas, ma'am," said Bud, reso-

lutely, though the superstitious heart of him was quaking. He jumped to his feet, having caught a glimpse of Slick Mose dodging through the garden. "By gum," he muttered, "he does be signalling now." With that he nodded to Della, and was off like a gunshot.

Della stood a second, then reflecting that she had no right to listen, she entered the house. Thus it occurred that she neither saw Bud racing after Slick Mose toward the swamp, nor could watch the group which presently plunged out of the library window in mad haste; but she, like every one else, heard, for the first time in many months, the forest flinging back the echoes of a boat whistle. She ran to the river shore. The low afternoon sun silvered the rippling water, and lay along the withered grass of the bank, and pierced far back into the forest cloisters. Rifts of smoke curled lazily through a still atmosphere. Children were playing by some humble doors. In the dim vistas of the woods the infinite softness of leafless tracery against the sky took on hues of purple and carmine. Across the river the silver sycamore masts rose out of a haze of underbrush, where one could see a few negroes driving cattle, which moved slowly, lowing and tinkling their bells, out

from the green sea of cane. Winter in the upper South has an austere yet not ungentle beauty, following the splendor of the other seasons like a meek sister of charity in the train of a queen. It is a loveliness (for it is soft enough for that name) which does not appeal to the senses, but it touches the heart.

How peaceful, how safe the scene looked to the beholder, who had loved it all her life. Yet the scream tearing from that iron throat was at once alarum and rallying-cry; it meant all the savagery of battle, it might mean havoc and despair. For a second her firm head played her false enough to picture flames leaping from those low roofs, and the poor earth-tillers lying stark and stiff among the cotton-stalks, and little children under the merciless hoofs, and all the awful tumult of flight for life. That was no more than they had to expect should the graybacks win. "But they won't win!" said Adèle, and directly she lifted a brave smile to her uncle, mounted now at the head of his troop.

Her mother ran out and kissed him before them all, and then ran swiftly back to the house. Adèle's turn for his farewells was next. He patted her on the back, and even in the stress of the

moment's emotions she remarked his altered manner—a sparkle in his eye, an erect carriage, and the old look of alert confidence on his face, as he whispered: "Tell Fair to chirk up, Collins is alive and kicking. Give him my love; tell him I know he'll look out for your maw and you. Give him the 'Montaigne' too. Will's in the little black box. You're a good girl, Della. God bless you! *You* look ayfter Fair."

Then his glance fell on the little crowd of slaves who had hurried, by this time, to "de big house."

"Boys," said he, "and all of you, I'm going this evening to give every man and woman in Lawrence County the right to sleep nights. And those thieves and murderers that have been hounding us, we'll give them a sleep that'll last till the day of judgment."

The men set up a cheer. Adèle heard the order to march. They were going; their flying hoofs beat a cloud along the road; they reached the brow of the hill; the shadow of the cypresses received them; they were gone.

Aunt Hizzie, centre of the black group in the gallery, relieved her own pent-up feeling by cuffing the nearest wailer and sending the rest right and left "tuh make ready a big supper."

"Yent no call you'n," she declaimed to Nels, who would have reproached her for studying 'bout eating an' drinking when most like 'ole marse or somebuddy would get killed up, and it would be a house of mourning.

"Yent no call er you'n ef folkses does git killed up. Dem dat doan' be killed up got t' eat, doan' dey? Doan' ye take on, nigger, dar be nuff leff!"

"An' how ef Mist' Dick Barnabas licks we uns, an' cums a rampin' an' a ragin' daown yere? Hay, Hizzie!" said Nels, with acrimony. "Whar you' big supper den?"

But he could not daunt his consort. She retorted: "Yent Mist' Dick Barnabas got a stommick like de restis er men persons? I lay he be a heap apter not t' kill we all ayfter a plumb good supper. You heah me! You, Solomon Izril, shet up you' mouf, de sun gwine warp you' teef. Make haste, kill dem banty chickens. You, Judy, look in de nestes fo' aigs. You, Charley, git de po'k. Keep a runnin', keep a runnin'! Cayn't work agin a cole collar,* nare un er yer, trifflin', ornery—ye jes' does w'ar me tuh a frazzle!"

Aunt Hizzie disappeared into the gallery, driv-

* A horse, in Arkansas, is said not to work with a cold collar when he must be heated before he will run or work.

ing her flock before her, leaving Nels to gloomily demand of the world in general what we were all coming to when wives berated and ra'red on their husbands, so scandilus like? Maybe Hizzie would feel bad when the graybacks killed him plumb dead. She wouldn't find it so easy to get another husband to be patient with her, like him.

A loud snort of contempt from the gallery betrayed that Hizzie had heard. "Huh!" she bawled, "you yent gwine get killed up, not long's ye kin *run!* An' if ye *ben*, dar's plenty more like yer leff. Weeds is a sho' crap!" And (whether with or without malice) she lifted her voice in song:

"Jestice settin' on de sprangles er de sun;
Jestice done plumb de line!
Cries hypocrite, hypocrite, I despise,
Wings is craptid, kin not rise.
Jestice done plumb de line!"

Meanwhile, up-stairs, Adèle made what preparations for an impromptu hospital their means allowed. Soon these were completed, and there was nothing left her but to wait.

Her mother was shut up in her room. She had come out to help, but, finding all done, was gone back to her Bible and her prayers.

Adèle climbed to the roof of the house. She had a companion, the old lieutenant left in charge, because his arm had been injured in the last skirmish. A paroled soldier, like most of Colonel Rutherford's men, he was fuming over his own inaction. "I have got scouts out all over," he exclaimed, "and if the rascals make a show against us I can send word mighty quick to the Colonel. The niggers will fight for their own necks, and they hate Barnabas like the devil. Besides, we've got three or four white men, crippled up like me, and some likely boys. Where's Bud Fowler at? I wanted to make him a sort of aide-de-camp; but Nels tells me he went off with that crazy fellow—what's his name?"

Adèle's reply was interrupted by a sharp crackling noise, then another similar sound, and another. The firing had begun. Her cheek paled, but the old soldier eagerly adjusted his field-glass. "I can see the smoke-stack of the boat," he shouted. "As sure as you're born they are at it! Say, does Dick ride a white mule?"

"He *had* a white mule, Mr. Collins's white mule. Oh, Mr. Lemew, did uncle hear that Mr. Collins wasn't dead?"

"Parson Collins? Yes, ma'am. That's what

they all were saying!" He held the glass in his hand, standing recklessly on the peak of the roof, and becoming more excited every moment. What would not Adèle have given for one peep through the black tubes! Oblivious of her presence, he stood on tiptoe, twisting and craning his head in a futile effort to bring the combat into his field of vision. He ran from one portion of the roof-tree to another. All in vain. "I've got to be higher," said he. "Say, Miss Della, if I get up on one of those chimneys, do you reckon you can hold me steady?"

Adèle felt the situation to be a galling travesty of the manner in which Rebecca reports the storming of the castle to Ivanhoe. But she had no right to snatch the glass; she was the inferior officer; she could only help her portly commander up on the brick ledge, where he balanced himself as best he might, while she served as prop below, burning with impatience. It was insupportable to watch him focussing the glasses, elevating them, depressing them, shaking his head or nodding it, all the while muttering his ridiculous compliments and apologies.

"Thank you, thank you, my dear young lady, that does right well, ma'am. I trust I am not

making you too uncomfortable. If I had got two legs—but the bullet I got at Helena has left one of them powerful weak. You are a mighty brave young lady, you are so. Ah-h—yes. There they are, for a fact. Humph!"

From his new post he could look over the trees down to the river-bank by the eddy. The boat was plainly visible, and an incessant rattle of gunshots was quite audible, since they were barely two miles away. The battle-ground had been chosen thus near the houses on purpose, because, being within easy reach, should occasion for defence occur, therefore they might spare the more men for attack.

"Can you see, Captain Lemew?" asked Adèle. The quiver in her patient voice touched the soldier. He answered, hastily: "You want to see too, I reckon. Well, I'll tell you all I can. I can see the boat, and the graybacks trying to board, and the boat fellows fighting. Cursed few of the blue coats. D—— their suspicions! Heap of smoke everywhere. Cayn't make out much. Our folks ain't got there."

"Can you make out any—any person?"

"Well, I don't know; I reckon I can young Rutherford. The young fellow isn't in com-

mand, I expect, but he is a fighter. Knows how to obey orders, too. I liked the looks of him in the little brush we all had with the gray-backs."

His eyes were glued to his glass, and he could not see the color dyeing his listener's pale cheeks. He continued, half to himself: "Most young fellows think all they have got to do to make soldiers is to rush ahead like a mad bull. Don't know whether it is Shakespeare or some other poet author says, 'Discretion is the better part of valor,' but he has hit it; hurrah! that's the old man on 'em! Now—they're charging! Parson Collins, sure's you're born!"

"What is it? Please tell me, Captain Lemew. Have the others come?"

The old soldier was prancing about in a truly perilous manner; but for her clutching his skirts and steadying him he had more than once plunged bodily down the chimney.

"Oh, my Lord, to be tied up here! Go it! go it! At 'em again!" screamed Lemew, wildly. "Good for you, grayback! That's one of the fellows came this morning. Saved Parson Collins. Will you look at the Parson? They all reckon he's dead, they're 'lowing he's a ghost. By gum,

they're breaking! Now, now, why in —— don't you try that horn on Ma'y Jane?"

"They are, they are!" cried Adèle, "hark to it!"

Thin and clear, both the listeners heard the far-away notes of a horn.

Lemew, in wild exultation, unable to spare a hand from the glass, nearly sprawled astride the chimney because he must needs kick triumphantly with one leg.

"She's a coming!" he yelled, "she knows the old horn. Look at her burn the wind! Dick cayn't hold her in! Ha! ha! Whoop-ee! Good Lord" (with a sudden drop of the voice to a groan), "that devil would conquer everything; he's faced her around. Hi!"

"What is it, please, what is it, sir?" Adèle pleaded.

"You cayn't see, for a fact. Wisht we had two glasses. I *have* to look, you understand; obliged. Why, what I was hollering at was Dick turned plum on young Rutherford, and if that grayback, Lige, hadn't caught the blow, you'd had one cousin the less, and a brave one, too."

"But he *did?*"

"Yes, ma'am, and got a bullet for his pains, I

reckon. Any way and anyhow he's dropped. Now they're in the smoke again. No use, Dick, you cayn't rally them."

It was indeed vain. The guerillas were flying in every direction, and at last the captain triumphantly flourished his glass in the air.

"We'll bag the whole gang 'most, Miss Della. The Colonel has got them on two sides, and the river's on the other. They're making for the swamp, all broke up. Well, ain't that like Ralph Rutherford?"

"Please, what, Captain Lemew?"

"Oh, you can't see." (The captain had the glass at his eyes again.) "Why, the old man, if you please, jist jumped off his horse and gave her to the young feller. Let him run after Dick. He's loped a loose horse himself. He's ayfter 'em too; but he cayn't keep up. No, sir."

"That was Betty Ward. She's our best horse."

The captain danced anew while he looked. "There he runs, the precious murdering cutthroat," he yelled; "they're ayfter him like a pack of dogs ayfter a wild hog! Oh, dad gum your ornery hide! That fool mule is jest splitting the mud! Four fellers ayfter him—pshaw! one of 'em's down. Dick's firing. Three left. Young

Rutherford's gaining. Dear, dear, dear, ain't that too bad!"

"What—what——"

"One of the horses made a blunder. Throwed his rider. Only two more. Thunder! his horse is played out! What a stumble! Dick will get off. No, maybe he won't. Young Rutherford's gaining—no—yes—cuss the trees! Cayn't see them now; they're in the slash."

"Won't they come out?"

"Gone the wrong way, but take the glass yourself. It's my turn now with the wagons and after the stragglers."

He scrambled down as he spoke. The wagons stood ready, fitted up roughly with cotton-seed, and blankets above, for ambulances. The few white men were mounted, and negroes sat in the wagons.

But Adèle lingered on the roof, vainly searching the darkening belt of forest against the horizon. Minute after minute passed, one fright-blurred glance after another peered down the forest-aisles —useless trouble, he was gone to his unknown peril! No one to help him, and Dick Barnabas was cruel and wily as a tiger, and knew the swamp by heart.

"At least, at least, I can always be proud of him," she thought.

It was a comfort to a sore heart; and she repeated it like a talisman as she worked, afterward.

X.

FAIRFAX held his way after Barnabas, deeper and deeper into the swamp. One feature of the scenery is all that he remembers; everywhere, the microscopic softness of tree and shrub articulation was spattered with myriads of tiny berries, red like blood. Dick never looked behind. Betty Ward put her head down and galloped—galloped. Logs had fallen, their black pointed boughs sticking up in the air like javelins. There was a tangle of elbow-brush and brier. It was hard riding. Fairfax left the road to the horse. If she did not know it, the chase was lost, anyhow. He sat well back in the saddle, but with his body inclined a little, and his eyes never left the bare head in front, with the floating black hair which rose and sank as the mule's white flanks flashed through the cane. He felt no fear. When his father gave him Betty Ward hadn't he said, "Well done, Fair; you done well, boy. Dick belongs to you. Take Betty and catch him."

The approval of one simple, rustic, heroic gen-

tleman was more to Fair than all the world's, than Adèle's even; he felt that he could storm a fort. Gentle as his nature was, he was possessed by the hunter's fury and the terrible joy of fight.

And Dick? Who knows what were his thoughts, and why he chose the direction in which he sped? Perhaps it seemed to him a temporary sanctuary protected by superstition (for it was toward La Rouge's farm that he spurred Ma'y Jane until her white sides were streaked with red), and his sole pursuer he valued lightly. He could soon quiet that boy. His revolver was empty, but so was the other's, or he would have fired. Little it mattered to Dick that the buzzards were skurrying along the sky over the murdered Frenchman's grave. Ma'y Jane floundered bravely through the morass. Where she climbed on firm ground, a broken-down corner of a fence stood, relic of one of La Rouge's rail-fences. Dick wheeled his horse to face Fair.

"Wa'al, Bud, come on," he cried, lifting his sword. Doubtless his intention was to set on his enemy just as he was struggling out of the mud. He stuck his spurs into the mule. Either he forgot Ma'y Jane's evil conditions, or, having mas-

tered her once, he believed too fondly in his own powers. He essayed to ride at Fair, past the fence-corner.

Immediately he realized his folly; Ma'y Jane's head had gone in the air with her heels, while fire flashed out of her wicked eyes; she jammed Dick's leg against the rails with such force that he reeled in the saddle; the second after, he was hurled backward into the swamp. It was the deepest place; the wretched man sank up to his waist in mire.

Fair easily made a landing. His enemy was only a blasted torso rising out of black slime. Slime streaked his face and matted his hair. Before a word could be said, he threw up his hands, dripping hideously like the rest of him.

Fair, whether or not he recognized a gesture equivalent to a white flag, perceived that the man was at his mercy.

Deliberately he loaded his pistol.

Dick's teeth glittered in an awful grin of hate and fear.

"Be ye aimin' t' kill me, an' me with my hands up?" he shrieked. "God, it's murder! You're no better nor *me!*"

"I am not going to shoot you," answered Fair-

fax, sternly, "I am going to guard you till the others come up."

Dick's other manner, his fawning smoothness, was on him now, while, nevertheless, he eyed Fairfax with a gaze venomous through all its terror, like the eyes of a trapped rat. "Mist' Rutherford," he began, "they won't come. They all 'low this place is ha'nted. Look a yere, we're jes' two gentlemen together; I own up I done you dirt mean—I do. I ax you' pardin. Nare gentleman kin do more, kin they, now? I see you' a brave man. I 'lowed to fight ye fair an' the bes' man win. But now you see my d—— condition; I'm chillin' this minnit, in this slush. Now, look a yere, you know I are a man er my word. Dick Barnabas never did rue back. You slew that er hackberry branch over my way, an' holp me out, an' I guv my word er honor I'll light a shuck outer this kentry, t'night, an' you all will be shet er Dick Barnabas fur ever more."

"No," said Fairfax.

The cold drops stood on Dick's forehead. "You 'low I'll keep on jayhawkin', some'ers else?" he cried. "I sw'ar I won't. I'll lead an honest life. I'll jine the Confederate army."

He was in earnest. But it was his unhappy

"Be ye aimin' t' kill me, an' me with my hands up?"

fate that his one virtue was little known to his judge, and that, moreover, on the single occasion of his other meeting with the latter he had pushed his shrewdness very near knavery. Any other man who fought Dick Barnabas that day had felt assured that he would keep his word; Fairfax Rutherford only remembered how, once, he had "kept his promise to the ear, only to break it to the sense."

Yet he was touched. Motion has much to do with the fever of the blood we call rage, that helps a man through a vast deal of slaughter. Fairfax sat at rest in his saddle; he could feel his horse pant, and could draw a long breath himself. Besides, he was a kind-hearted young fellow, who hated to see a fox killed; and here was a pitiful spectacle, a human being in so horrid a plight, begging his life. He felt his violent desires ebbing away. More than he had wanted to slay the outlaw before, he wanted to save him now.

Dick's glassy black balls never missed a change in the other's face; he saw the wavering, he went on eagerly, rapidly: "Look a yere, it's natchell, I know, fur ye t' lay up agin me how I done ye. I'll make up. I got a heap er truck hid away. I'll show ye whar 'tis, if ye let me go! Ain't I

makin' up? Ye kin give it ter the other folkses, if ye like. Tell ye, they all wud heap ruther git thar money back to havin' me killed up. Ye know they wud."

They might, Fair thought. And perhaps he was taking a private revenge instead of acting, against his compassion, for the public good alone. How ghastly he looked, poor wretch! Must he guard him until help came, with night approaching? They might be an hour riding there, two hours—they might not come all night. Fair turned sick at the thought of the wretch freezing and fainting in the cold ooze. Why, it were more merciful to shoot him on the spot. "I shall have to, if they are too long!" he groaned. The sheer human repulsion from such butchery mastered him. But he sat motionless. Could he believe Dick? Inexorably, his experience answered, no. His reason, beginning to speak, reminded him that, this one man dead, there would be an end of brigandage in the Black River country. The fields would be tilled, the crops planted, honest men would ride freely about their business, women and children would no longer live in terror. Let them only know that Dick had been captured and killed, the rogues left would think of nothing but hiding.

He remembered his own oath to bring Jim Fowler's assassin to justice; yet that did not count like other things, like the chances for Dick's followers, for instance. Were he to let Dick escape, every wounded prisoner would be hung before sundown. Colonel Rutherford was fully persuaded that the peace of the country required an awful example. Dick was the leader; Dick executed, he might prevail on his father to show mercy to the minor ruffians. Fairfax did not deceive himself. He judged Dick's doom righteous and necessary; what was intolerable was to be the executioner.

"I am a coward again," thought he, with an inexpressible sinking of the soul. And on the heels of that thought came another: Here was his expiation for that past shame, to deliver the murderer to justice.

And whatever may be said for or against his decision, no one of the fearless soldiers and statesmen who were Fairfax Rutherford's ancestors ever did a braver act or one better becoming a good citizen, than he then; choosing the worst torture to a man of sensibility, the torture of inflicting pain before the risk of calamity to the commonwealth.

But he could not meet Dick's wicked, scared eyes; he turned his head as he answered:

"It's no use, Barnabas; I bear you no malice, but I can't let you go."

"Ye *dasn't* let me go! You' a cyoward!" screamed the wretch. His voice was terrible.

Fairfax's face was whiter than his. Instead of replying to the taunt, he pulled a whiskey flask out of his pocket and threw it to the outlaw, calling him to catch it, drink it—it would keep the cold out.

But he would not look at the man gulping down the liquor in furious haste.

He wheeled his horse to ride back a little distance, thinking thus to get a better view through the trees, and to call for help. At the same instant Betty Ward shied, and something like a line of white fire sheared the air past him, to bury itself in a cypress-trunk, where it hung quivering—Dick Barnabas's bowie-knife.

Fairfax turned. But not for the useless blow; he turned because the wood was reverberating with the crash of a gunshot and a scream of agony.

Where Dick had stood there remained only an awful bas-relief of a head and shoulders flung face downward with outstretched arms on the smooth,

black mud. A hand moved once. The wind lifted the long black hair. That was all. In a few moments the smooth black surface was unbroken.

Bud Fowler slipped calmly down from his perch in a swamp hackberry-tree, at right angles to Fair. He was neither pale nor flushed, but sallow and freckled and solemn-looking, as usual. And, as usual, one of his hands was hitching up his trousers.

"All that ar good whiskey plumb wasted!" was his first speech; "wa'al, he won't drink no more. I promised maw I'd kill 'im, an' I done it."

"Perhaps you'll be good enough to tell me where *you* came from, Bud," said Fair, who felt horribly shaken, and found a certain relief in speaking lightly.

"Oh, I b'en yere right along," replied Bud, his drawling accent not a whit hurried by excitement. "Berries is thick up thar, an' hid me. I 'lowed to shoot, onyhow, but I sorter waited tuh hear Dick

beg fur marcy, kase he never did show none. I was jes' gettin' ready w'en you throwed the mean skunk you' w'iskey. 'Laws,' says I, 'let the critter get one drink daown 'im, fust!' w'en, blame my skin, ef he didn't up an' shy that ar knife at ye. Tell ye, I let drive mighty quick. Hit him *fine*, didn't I?"

"He gave a nasty scream."

Bud grinned. "That warn't him a schreechin'. He tumbled over still's a wild hoeg, an' ye cayn't git nare squeal outer them ef ye cut 'em ter pieces.* That ar' b'en Mose. He never kin see nobody hurted without squealin'. All right, Mose. Good Mose!"

Mose stuck "his long locks colored like copper wine" out from his ambush of live-oak leaves. Beholding Fair, he nodded vigorously, then he cast his eyes down on the swamp and shuddered.

"Mose tolled me yere," said Bud; "I 'lowed he b'en seekin' tuh have me meet up with—him they says santers raoun' yere; an' I are shore," added Bud, hurriedly, and with elaborate civility, lest the invisible denizen of the swamp might take his

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* A fact. One may cut a wild pig's throat and he will only gnash his teeth. They fight to the last.

words amiss, "I are shore he got the bestis right yere. But, fact war, Mose he done f'und aout some caches, yere. Ye know he are forever projickin' raoun' tuh find things. An' he wanted me tuh come find 'em, tew. Though I ain't noways faultin' *him* "—his tone sank in propitiation again—"mos' like he shew Slick Mose all the plunder. Say, Dick needn't of offered tuh tell whar he kep' his truck; Mose an' me kin tell ye. This yere tree an' whar he are, tew, does be jes' plumb full."

XI.

AMONG the wounded in the fight with the graybacks was Lige. With the other wounded men he was carried back to the plantation; and at sunrise, next morning, was aroused out of a delirious stupor by a volley of musketry. He asked feebly what it meant. Sam was at his side.

"Wa'al, ye know, we uns won," said he.

"Be the ole man a shootin' all the boys?"

"Naw, naw," replied Sam, briskly, "we uns taken a heap er pris'ners, but young Rutherford he did beg most on 'em off. On'y four b'en shot, Mack an' Ziah an' tew them Teague boys iz killed the ole woman. Restis got off, promisin' better ways in futur."

"This yere's a better way t' go, ain't it, Sammy? Nice, clean bed in the Cunnel's haouse, an' ever'buddy kine and pleasant."

Sam was digging his knuckles into his red eyes; he answered, gruffly: "You ain't goin' nowhar, so you shet up!"

Lige's face worked a little. "We uns b'en runnin' t'gether fur a right smart, now ain't we?" he said, while Sam frowned as though at his worst enemy. "You ain't much tuh talk, Sam, but you' a man tuh tie tew."

"Naw, I ain't," sobbed Sam; "d—— ye, Lige, don't go fur t' make a baby er me, this yer way!"

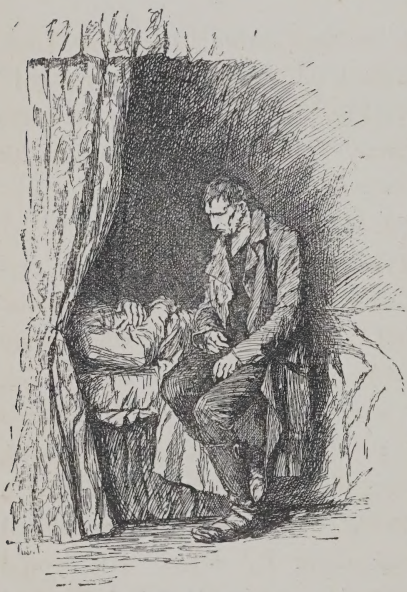
Lige laughed feebly. "You b'en allus the same contrairy cuss, Sam." Then, with a change of his face: "What's come er Dick?"

"Devil got him, at last," said Sam.

Glad to divert his comrade's thoughts, he rapidly sketched Dick's end. "We all b'en packin' up the wyounded," he continued, "when they comes in; the young feller an' Bud an' that ar ijit, Slick Mose. Fust word the ole man sayd: 'Whar's Dick Barnabas?' sezee. 'Dick Barnabas is dead, sir,' says the young feller, mighty solemn, 'an' a layin' out thar in the swamp whar he murdered Laruge. The boy done it,' sezee. An' you'd orter heerd the cheerin'. 'But Mist' Fair fotched him thar an' mired him up,' says Bud, a hollerin' it loud. 'That's all right, my son,' says the Cunnel, and shakes young Rutherford's hand.

"Then my young gentleman begins an' begs for the other graybacks' lives. 'Wa'al,' says the

ole man, 'I sayd this night ever' woman an' chile in Lawrence Caounty cud go t' sleep an' not be skeered er the graybacks. If Dick's dead that's shore the case. Fur these fellers, we'll giv 'em a fa'r caourt marshill, an' them ain't done *tew* much murderin' we'll let off.' That ar's whut they done."



Lige and Sam.

Lige nodded. "W a 'a l," he said, after a pause, "fur all I got my ticket yistiddy, I yent sorry I come; Dick had 'a' killed off young Rutherford, shore, if I hadn't be'n thar. Sorter takes the taste er the meanness we uns done him outer my mouth. An' so he begged Race an' the restis off. Wa'al, *sir!* Fit well, tew, didn't he?"

"He did so," Sam agreed, cordially.

Lige appeared to be thinking. "Naw," he muttered, finally, with a dissatisfied sigh, "taste ain't out yit. An' if I war—war to meet up with Parson, over thar, he'd be beratin' me, shore's you' barn. I got to own up, Sam."

"Do you reckon?" said Sam, wistfully.

"Ya'as, I do. Sam, will ye ax the ole man an' him come in yere, a minnit?"

Making no further protest, and apparently understanding him, Sam moved out of the room. Once in the hall, behind the door, the tears rolled unchecked down his cheeks.

"Lord A'mighty, ain't I a fool!" he kept muttering, fighting with his sobs. "Quit, ye jack! Let you'seff be so overcrawed! Ain't ye got no grit? D—— ye, *quit!*"

But for all his abuse, he could hardly get through his message to the Colonel; and, back in the room, he flung himself on his knees and buried his face in the pillow. Aunt Hizzie had been sent to summon Fair, who immediately responded.

The cook's thoughts being thereby directed into gloomy channels, moved her to song, as usual. Up in Lige's room they could hear her chant:

"Oh, mohnah, guv up you' hain't t' die,
When de rocks an' de mountyns dey all fall away,
Den ye shill fine a new hidin' place.
I'll go!"

"Confound her, *I'll* go!" cried the Colonel, "I'll shut her up."

"Naw, sir, don't," Lige interjected in his spent voice, which they had to bend to hear. "I like tuh hear her. Minds me—er my maw—singin'—an' me a totin' in trash fur the fire. She b'en a turrible—good woman—maw—seen a heap er tr'uble, tew. She—she are dead, ye understan'—used ter much you sight, Sam. Say'd you—b'en the willin'est boy."

"Sick folks don't like noise."

"His mind wanders," whispered Fair to his father.

"Naw, 't doan', neether," gurgled Sam; "she did, tew! Never you mind, Lige."

He groped, through his tears, for a glass on the table and held it to Lige's lips. The liquor appeared to give him a transient vigor; he opened his eyes and said, in a clear tone: "I are glad to see you all. I won't hender ye much. Fust, Cunnel, you promised me fifty dollars kase I fit, yistiddy. I want it all t' go t' my ole side-pardner, Sam. Him an' me—Sam, quit goin' that a way!"

Sam choked his sobs by cramming the counterpane in his mouth. "He ain't done nare much bad things, an' ef he does be you' friend you kin depend on 'im till he draps. That ar's fust. Second. You all reckon Mist' Rutherford did shoot Parson Collins. He didn't. It b'en *me* shot him. I didn't aim t' kill him; I bin hid in the bush, an' I fired at Dick kase I cudn't stay his devilin' the young feller, no longer. Sam, he cudn't neether; he guv a sorter screech; an' I shot, but Dick he jes' then stooped daown, suddint like, and the shoot went crossways into Parson's shoulder. Looked like he b'en hit in the hairt, but he didn't b'en. Sam he 'spicioned how it mout a' b'en. Reckon Ziah an' Mack did, tew, fur they knowed Mist' Rutherford didn't fire. Anyway, Sam he come back an' holped me, an' 'tween us we toted Parson tuh Aunt Tennie's, an' she nussed 'im well. Slick

Mose, he b'en monkeyin' raoun' mighty briefly, so we 'lowed you uns wud know he didn't b'en killed. But when Parson got pearter he got Sam an' me t' shake the graybacks, an' go t' you uns. You know what did happen. You uns scheemed fur Parson tuh play ghost on 'em, an' it worked *fine*."

His narrative was finished with great difficulty, so fast were his powers failing him; but with a strong effort he turned his body in Fair's direction.

"Will ye—call—it squar', young feller?" said he.

Fair had stood like Spenser's knight in his colloquy with despair:

> "And troubled blood through his pale face was seen
> To come and go with tidings from the heart,
> As it a running messenger had been."

Only it was hope that agitated him.

"Why, surely," he exclaimed, in a trembling voice, "and I'm awfully grateful to you for telling."

"I sorter hated tuh tell, fur a fact," the grayback said, faintly; "ye see, thar's Parson. I was jubious iz how he'd take it. I'd hate mightily tuh have Parson think hard er me. Wud—wud ye

sorter give hit easy like tuh Parson, if ye please, sir. Putt it in nice big-saoundin' words, an' p'int out cl'ar how I never did aim tuh do him a meanness."

"Yes, of course," said Fair; "I'll bring him here."

It was not hard to make Parson Collins lenient in his view of Lige's act. "Why, he didn't go for to hit me," cried he; "bless my soul, he was only aiming to hit Dick Barnabas, which I consider a virtuous act! Yes, sir, a plumb virtuous act! The intent, you know, sir, the intent—we are all liable to shoot wrong. Miserable sinners, miserable sinners, you know. Dear, dear, dear! ain't it too bad the poor fellow's got to die? Five killed, and this makes six, besides the graybacks who I had ought to count, I expect, but it doesn't look like the same thing. Yesterday, sir, minded me of the words of the Psalmist, 'Ride on because of the word of truth, of meekness, and righteousness; and thy right arm shall teach thee terrible things.' Terrible, verily, sir, but we must not forget that they are merciful, also, since they have delivered this poor country from the spoiler." He was standing at the foot of the stairs, and now bent over and took off his boots, muttering, "Sick folks

don't like noise. He used to be mighty still and careful with me."

It happened that their way led them by a window in the hall. Neither of them looked out. They knew why the little crowd was still loitering under the pecan-trees, and why the wagons and the black men with spades waited. The Parson said, under his breath: "'Madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.' God forgive them!"

Lige was too feeble to say much to them. He asked Parson Collins, eagerly, if it was all square between them, and seemed pleased at the answer. Then he sank into a semi-conscious state, while the minister prayed fervently, aloud.

Something of the petition he must have comprehended, for at its close he whispered, "That's all right, Parson. That's me, ornery, trifling, wicked cuss; but d—— if I ain't sorry!"

The Parson took no more note of the profanity than did poor Lige, who swore in all simplicity, and with a contrite heart. Presently he spoke again. "Say, Parson, *did* ye get Ma'y Jane?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Rutherford fetched her."

A very pleasant smile dawned on the grayback's face. "Dick got skinned all raoun', then,

I tole ye, Sam, he cudn't match Parson in a trade." With that he laid his cheek against his old comrade's arm and shut his eyes.

They thought that he slept. But in a little while his sleep was merged into that slumber the dreams of which are never unravelled by waking care.

XII.

THE two Rutherfords left the Parson with Sam. The Colonel had said to Fair: "Mind coming into the library a minnit, Fair?" He walked ahead, erect, with his most martial air. He set his feet firmly on the floor. But Fair looked dazed and ashamed. His thankfulness (now that he had time to realize that his nerves had not betrayed his will) was so intense that it approached humiliation. "I came awfully near yielding, anyhow," he was thinking.

He was keenly conscious, besides, of the embarrassment of the situation, a son grievously wronged by his father, at least in thought, going to an explanation, possibly to an apology. He cudgelled his wits to find a way to assure the old man that no abasement was needed, without offensively assuming that any abasement was due. He grew hot over the dilemma. But he might have spared himself any worry on the Colonel's account. Plainly that gentleman felt none for himself. No sooner were they in the library than

he sank into his own especial chair and flung one leg over the arm. It was an attitude that Fair remembered from his childhood, but he had not seen it once since he came home.

"Anything to drink, Fair?" said the Colonel, smiling as genially as if the tears were not twinkling in his eyes. "Thanks to you, we are pretty

well stocked up again. No? Well, that's right. '*Tis* too early in the morning. Well, boy, I reckon I had ought to say something to you; but, fact is, it goes better in a story. There was a fellow in old Virginia was a great wag. He was mighty fond of good company and used to stay pretty late nights at the tavern. He had a nice

wife, but she was tolerable fiery and high-strung, and I reckon, sometimes, he got a good dressing down when he got home. We all felt rather curious about it, and one night, when he was pretty happy, waiting on the moon, we asked him what he used to say when he got home. 'Oh, that's easy nuff,' says he, 'I don't say much. I jest say, good evening—*she* says the rest!'"

"That's about my position, Fair. I've made a cussed fool mistake about you, and I'm infernally g glad of it. Y-you can say the rest! So shake hands."

Fair jumped up to shake hands, but his father hugged the slight young figure with such energy that there was barely breath enough left in it to gasp: "I say, father, after that I think I *will* take something."

He could not have pleased the Colonel better.

"And I'm p-proud of you, sir. Always w-was," he roared, quite openly wiping his eyes, "always aim to be. Oh, never m-mind my crying! As Montaigne says, you know, some fellers cry easier than others—or words to that effect. Now set down and wait, till I fetch in your s-stepmother." He stopped short, his eyes wandered to the canvas from which looked the girlish beauty of Fair's own

mother; and his voice failed him. Did she, too, see this day when his son who was dead was alive again; who was lost, was found?

"Fair," he said, hoarsely, "she—she's proud of you, too."

XIII.

IN how short a time does peace repair the ravages of war! The bugle had sounded its last charge on the Black River. Where the guerillas paid the penalty of their crimes, the next spring's grass covered the trampled sod as generously as if it had never been disfigured or stained. The mill buzzed cheerily over huge logs, sawing for "the new houses." A score of ragged, good-natured idlers hung about the well-filled shelves of the store, or over a gay huddle of ploughs and wagons by the river-side, bartering their future crops.

Very tender and lovely looked the first dawn of the spring foliage. The cypress-trees were newly pricked out in green, and the sullen black-walnuts had not so much as ventured a bud on the chances of summer; but already the live-oaks and the willows glittered in woodland bravery. The sycamores looked like illuminations in an old missal, with dull-gold leaves on silver boughs. Gorgeous vermilion and orange blooms on the maple, yellow

sassafras-blossoms, velvet hickory-buds, shaded darkly red, brilliant tassels swinging from cotton-wood limbs, white dogwood, tier on tier, in the woods, scarlet buckeye bells, and purple masses of red-bud were blended in a magical tapestry hung between earth and sky for the poorest's joy.

All the innumerable vines and creeping or climbing things, the shrubs, the saplings—the woodland peasantry, one may say—were astir, growing and leafing. The thrill of the beautiful season of life and hope seemed to vibrate everywhere. The very logs and stumps were fair to see, now, sheathed in leaves and floating tendrils.

But far back in the brake, where the shade made a dusk at midday, where hideous hackberry trunks and cypress knees and a thicket of rank swamp-flowers surrounded a ruined cotton-field, who could tell whether the buzzards still poised their wings above one twice-accursed spot? Aunt Hizzie had grewsome tales of a ghost capering on the shore, and a ghost cursing and sinking in the mire. No one ever ventured near enough to contradict her. Bud Fowler, who was prospering on his father's farm, only blinked his sharp eyes and remarked that he hadn't lost nare ghost, for why should he go hunt one?

"Bud's all right," said the Colonel; "he makes me think of Aunt Hizzie when old Tappitoes wanted to baptize her in winter. She wouldn't, cause she'd sure be chillin', she said. 'Doan' ye trust in de Lawd, sister?' says ole Tappitoes—biggest black scoundrel unhung, ye know!—'Doan' ye trust in de Lawd?' says he. 'Aw, ya'as, bruder,' says Hizzie, 'I does trust p'intedly in de Lawd; but I ain't gwine fool wid him!' That's Bud—he ain't 'fraid of ghosts, but he don't 'low to fool with them."

The one black spot on the plantation is out of sight of the house; it did not disturb Adèle, when she looked out of the library window and gazed around her, on a certain bright spring morning. Freshly turned furrows drawn across the fields showed that men hoped to gather what they should sow. Whitewash smartened the cabins. Fences were mended. There were a few new houses of the humbler sort. Compared to the desolate stagnation which was the lot of most Southern plantations in those days, the place looked marvellously prosperous.

The Colonel, who had returned to his old idolatry, openly ascribed his happier state to Fair. "Fact is, sir, my son is a stirring young man.

Energy and education, both. Knows how to manage."

Really, Fair had worked with a pathetic industry to master a new business, but the Colonel did himself and his silent partner, Adèle, injustice, and something is due to Fairfax Senior's capital.

Adèle, however, was only too pleased to be effaced; to be able to admire and exult where she had used to comfort and defend. At first, with unmixed joy, she used to watch Fairfax in his new clothes, with his exquisite toilet appointments (the young sybarite must needs send to New York for them); ivory brushes and hand-glasses, and glittering steel instruments for the care of his nails, the uses of which her imagination could not compass; soaps and sponges and mysterious bath luxuries; a great box, in fact, at which the Colonel jeered, and in which he secretly gloried beyond measure. And Adèle, too, gloried, having found her fairy prince again. She liked him to be fastidious in his personal habits; she was proud of his polished manners and his clothes and the very fashion of his talk. Fair, indeed, appeared in a new *rôle*. Mrs. Rutherford could not find enough to say regarding his amusing qualities. He took the inconveniences and

vexations and restrictions of their manner of living as gayly as possible. He set himself to learning the dialect with tremendous zeal. He was enraptured with the woods and the water; he rode, he hunted; even in his misadventures he always discovered something ludicrous. Being a capital mimic, he could tell a story in a way to captivate his father; while, had his sympathy with all her plans, his "handy ways about a house," his small domestic ingenuities, and his promptness at meals not already won her, Mrs. Rutherford had surrendered afresh, every time she heard his peals of laughter over Colonel Rutherford's jokes. And yet, often, when Parson Collins preached, or they gathered, Sunday nights, around the piano (which Fair had tuned), and he played while they sang their simple hymns; or, it may be, merely walking in the woods, or standing on the river-bank to view the daily pageant of sunset, Adèle would observe a mood of deep though not sad gravity.

She could imagine, at such times, that he was remembering the past with gratitude, and surveying the future with humility.

Those were the times when she felt her old sense of nearness to him; just as she used to feel in the horrible, precious past, when she was all that he

had of hope or consolation. There was the misery of it, she was nothing to him now. Does any love resign its right to help without a pang? At first, in her unselfish devotion, Adèle was purely and proudly glad. But little by little a gulf had seemed to open between them. She read Fair's new novels (which came by every boat since the boat had begun running), and felt a sick sort of dismay, because she knew that she did not in the least resemble any of Dickens's or Thackeray's or Trollope's heroines. With the kindest intentions he sent for a great heap of feminine finery and fashion-plates for her guidance. I profess I could weep (as Adèle did, *entre nous*), when I picture those poor Arkansas gentlewomen poring helplessly over the pictures, and contrasting the strange furbelows with Madam Rutherford's one cherished threadbare silk, which had been the couple's gown of state (worn impartially by either) for years.

"Oh, mamma"—I seem to hear Adèle's voice with the little shake to it, because, in spite of her, she cannot speak quite firmly—"we never *can* make a dress like these. They ain't like anything that I ever saw on earth!"

It was not vanity that made Adèle cry so bit-

terly when she went to bed that night, although she took herself to task quite as ferociously as if it had been.

It came to this pass, finally, that the dejected scorn of herself in comparison with him, which had wrung the little girl's heart, now hung like a stone on the woman's. Of course, she grew less cordial, less frank and unstudied, with Fair. Then after a time she thought that she could see that he was not so happy. There was more premeditation about his gayety, and sometimes, if he did not know he was watched, it would drop from his countenance, to be replaced by a sombre care.

"He is fretting to go back," thought Adèle.

This morning her imagination was repeating a scene at the breakfast-table which seemed to her to offer the key to Fair's late depression. Adèle is watching Fair read his letters. A photograph, somewhere in the pile, slips off the table, on to the floor, at her feet. She tells herself it is dishonorable to look, she assures herself that she will not look, and, of course, eventually, she does look. She sees a very pretty girl in a gown like those which are Adèle's despair, a girl who has a high-bred air in every line of her face. Fair is

too absorbed in his letter to notice anything else; it is the Colonel who picks up the *carte.*

"Hullo!" says he, "here's a pretty way to treat a fair lady! Who is she, Fair? Favors Della a bit, but she ain't half so handsome."

Fair holds out his hand for the photograph and says, with what Adèle considers a very good imitation of composure: "Her name is Lady Etheldred Aylmer."

"Thunder!" exclaims the Colonel, who instantly looks very foolish, and falls upon the unlucky Nels; "What the deuce is he making such a hullabaloo for, in the gallery?"

"Why, laws, Marse," cries Nels, "dat ain't me hollerin' an' bellerin'. Dat Solomon Izril; he done steal a big drink outer one er Hizzie's mixteries; an' it *wukin' in him!*"

"Oh, you get out," bawls the Colonel, good-humoredly; "you're always abusing Hizzie." There is more to the same purpose; and doubtless the innocent soldier flatters himself that he has deceived his womankind into thinking that his ejaculation started for Nels. He goes off to the store, chuckling. Presently Fair follows him. Before his back is well out of the door, Mrs. Rutherford sighs, "Dear boy, he is so like Jeff."

No one could be less like Jeff than Fair, but it is Mrs. Rutherford's highest compliment. "I hope he *won't* marry this Lady—what's her name?" she continues; "I hate to think of him going away. Oh, dear, I 'most wish I hadn't got to being so fond of him!"

Adèle feels her heart stand still; yet she asks, carelessly enough, "Is there any chance of his marrying her?"

"Well, Uncle Fair wants him to," says Mrs. Rutherford; "dear me, there goes Aunt Hizzie. That woman is right trying. Never *will* move, stands right where she happens to be, and *hollers*."

So Mrs. Rutherford hurries away while Aunt Hizzie's mellow tones fill the gallery: "*You*, Solomon Lize, wherever you is! go tell ole miss Slick Mose got a mess er greens fur er."

This is the scene which Adèle was dolefully elaborating to herself until she saw Slick Mose approach. The idiot was clad very decently in a jean suit, and was blowing on one of those little mouth-pieces called "harps" in the South. His elf-locks had been cut and were plastered unevenly over his skull, Mose's idea of high toilet. He slunk through the garden round to the front

of the house. Adèle knew that he was seeking her.

Instinctively, she drew back out of sight. Then, "What right have I to be sorry?" she said sternly to herself; "it is cruel to disappoint a poor crazy creature." She forced herself to smile at Mose. He came and stood below the window, and she sat on the sill and talked with him and listened to him. He showed her the mouth-organ which Fair had given him. "He good," jabbered Mose, "love La Da!" And he laughed.

Was even this brutish creature to stab her? But she remembered how simple and limited was poor Mose's definition. Yes, surely, in the way Mose meant, he did love her. It was something. Why, it was all she wanted.

"No," said Adèle, "I never have lied to myself, I won't now; it isn't!" Meanwhile, Mose was crooning the air to a song which Fair used to sing. He had the same facility in catching the notes of music that he had in mimicking the birds' calls or the wild beasts' cries.

"Oh, I say, Mose, where did you pick up my song?" Mose may have seen the young man coming, but the tender little German melody had

drawn Adèle into another world; she started so violently at Fair's voice that she almost fell out of the window. Fair caught her; he held her for a second—long enough to see that her eyes were full of tears.

With as grave a face as her own, he released her.

Mose, looking from one to the other, began a distressed murmur. "You must smile," said Adèle, quickly, "he likes to see smiles; always, poor soul. Look, Mose, it's all right, Mose; and there's your friend, Mr. Collins, coming. Run and meet up with him."

Mose clapped his hands. He needed no further urging to run toward a portly elderly man on a white mule.

"Well, Cousin Adèle," said Fair, "what is the matter?"

"I don't understand you, Cousin Fair."

"Oh, yes, you do; what made you cry?"

"I—I don't know. I reckon it was the song."

"The song! Do you know the words, then?"

"They are German. I don't understand German."

He looked at her with rather a strange expression, she thought.

"It is something of Heine's," said he, "one of his adorable, incomparable trifles. Only two stanzas. In the first the poet tells of the miseries people have brought on him—some of them with their hate, some of them with their love. Then he says that she who has ruined him most completely is 'she who never has hated me, she who never has loved.' That's all."

Adèle murmured a faint "Oh!" Feeling that hardly adequate comment, she added, "I didn't expect you to stop so soon."

He was regarding her with extraordinary gravity. "I believe," said he, letting each word have its full ring, as if it were a coin to be tested, "I believe I *won't* stop. It would be base for me to say that *you* had done for me like the sweetheart in the song, for whether you make me miserable now or not, you saved me, and I shall always thank God I knew such a noble woman as you. But—life will be awfully hard to stand if you can't love me—some time."

She turned her head away.

"Adèle, I didn't dare say this, before. I said I would try to show you I was something more than the poor creature you saved from despair. Have I shown myself enough of a man

to have the right to tell you how I love you, dear?"

His only answer was a whisper; of which he could barely catch the words, "Lady Etheldred."

He laughed outright in a sudden relief. "Lady Etheldred is awfully sweet and jolly," said he, "and she is engaged to the best fellow in the world, and my best friend. She wrote me all about it this morning. Such a nice, womanly sort of a letter. I don't believe she would mind your seeing it. In fact"—he flushed uncomfortably—"I did tell her something about you, and there is a—a reference to you in it. You had been so stiff to me lately I was awfully low, and she—she heartened me up in the nicest way and advised me to—to speak to you."

"But Uncle Fair? She was his choice for you." This sentence came clearer.

Fairfax laughed again. "Oh, he is quite reconciled. Besides, as long as I am not *her* choice, you know it can't very much matter."

"But I am sure he wouldn't want you to marry me," said Adèle, slowly.

"Don't be too sure," said Fairfax, gayly (yet he flushed a little, having his uncle's letter in his pocket and fresh from an indignant reading of its

cool sentences, its reservations about Adèle, and its rather cynical resignation to hot-headed youth); "he gives his consent—if I can gain yours. Of course, I made a clean breast of everything. He is coming here."

He caught her arm with a kind of tender rudeness which she did not think was in him, yet which did not offend her. "I am afraid of you," he cried; "why do you treat me this way? Why did you avoid me? Did you want to spare me the mortification of asking and being refused? Do you think *I* can be mortified before you—after you have seen me—oh, I loved you even then, though I thought I had no hope you could do anything more than pity such a cur! Do you know the picture I was always drawing in my head by way of consoling myself? It was to get killed by the graybacks—after performing prodigies of valor, of course—and then be carted here somehow and die with my head on your arm. That seemed to me my only way out of the hole.

"Well, you know how it was. I didn't perform any prodigies. I didn't bring Dick Barnabas to bay—the mule threw him. I hadn't the resolution to shoot him. It was, I confess, all I could do

to keep from letting the villain get off scot-free. Bud shot him. All that was left for me to do was just to plod along here, thankful to God that my wretched cowardice hadn't made me a murderer, and that I hadn't shown the white feather at the last. I swore to myself I would at least show you that I understood what you said to me that day, and that I wouldn't speak until you knew that I was safe to stick to my expiating like the people in the marriage ceremony, 'until death do us part.' And lately—well, lately, I haven't dared."

She turned her face the very least toward him, a small concession which made him immediately possess himself of her other hand.

"My darling," he said, huskily, "I am a poor fellow, I know, but the bravest man in the world couldn't love you more than I do."

"You are the bravest man in the world to me!" said she, lifting her sweet eyes bravely, though her cheeks were afire.

He uttered a rapturous exclamation and would have drawn her toward him, but a noise of whacks and shouts startled them both. Yells of, "Whoa. Huh! Quit your funning!" and the like, ended in:

"Well, have your own way, you hussy, you'll live longer."

Fairfax, who had jumped through the window, swung himself back. "It is nothing," said he, "only Parson Collins leading Ma'y Jane round a fence-corner."

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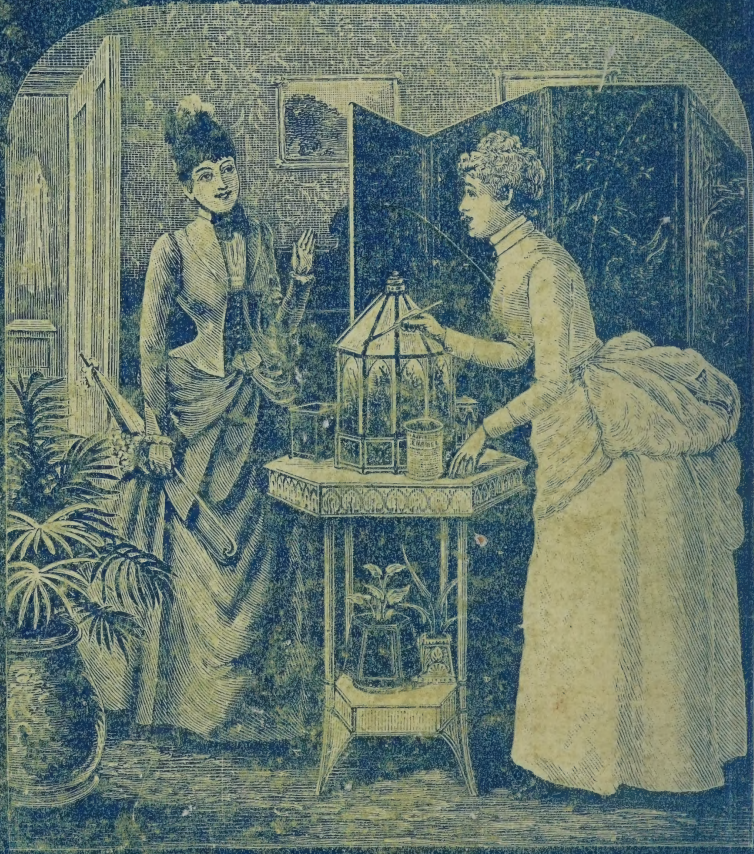

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